THIS BOOK MUST BE PROTECTED IN WET WEATHER.

No. H 1190

HAMMERSMITH PUBLIC LIBRARIES
LENDING DEPARTMENTS

1. THIS BOOK MUST BE RETURNED WITHIN FOURTEEN DAYS FROM THE DATE OF ISSUE, but the loan may be renewed for a further period of fourteen days on notice being given to the Librarian, either personally, in writing, or by telephone, and provided it is not required by another borrower. (In renewing please quote above number and date of return).
2. BORROWERS DETAINING BOOKS BEYOND THE AUTHORISED PERIOD will be liable to a fine of ONE PENNY PER WEEK or portion of a week for each book so detained.
3. Hours of opening are: Weekdays 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. (College Park Branch, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., 6 p.m. to 9 p.m). On Wednesdays all lending departments are open 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. only. Closed on Sunday and Public Holidays and at other times by authority of the Council.

---

4. Books that have been exposed to any infectious disease must be returned to the office of the Medical Officer of Health for disinfection.
5. Books should be kept clean, protected from wet weather, and any damage or imperfection reported.
6. Students who require extra books for special purposes should apply to the Librarian. Any book may be reserved (non-fiction, free of charge).
7. Readers may propose books for addition to the Library, and their suggestions will receive careful consideration.
8. The Librarian has power to refuse books and may suspend or cancel tickets of borrowers who fail to comply with the regulations.

FM (H251) 8.39

K. G. HUNT, B.A., F.L.A.,
Chief Librarian.

LONDON BOROUGH OF LEWISHAM
LIBRARY SERVICE

Author

Title

BOOK STORE

Books or discs must be returned on or before the last date stamped on label or on card in book pocket. Books or discs can be renewed by telephone, letter or personal call unless required by another reader. After library hours use the Ansafone Service (01-698 7347). For hours of opening and charges see notices at the above branch, but note that all lending departments close at 1 pm on Wednesday and all libraries are closed on Sundays, Good Friday, Christmas Day, Bank Holidays and Saturdays prior to Bank Holidays.

METROPOLITAN
SPECIAL COLLECTION

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2026

https://archive.org/details/onfindingengland0000haro

ON FINDING ENGLAND

HAMMERSMITH
PUBLIC LIBRARIES

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"ON FINDING ENGLAND"

IN SALONIKA WITH OUR ARMY. 3/6 net.

[*Third Edition at Press.*

THE GERMAN SCHOOL AS A WAR NURSERY. By V. H. FRIEDEL. With an Introduction by Prof. SADLER, D.Litt. Price 4/6 net.

JUST PUBLISHED

THE POCKET "STUDENT IN ARMS." By DONALD HANKEY. Fcap. 8vo, 2/6 net.

PEACE OF MIND. Essays and Reflections. August 1914–September 1917. Price 3/6 net.

[*Second Edition at Press.*

The Nation says: "As satisfying as the light of a homestead when one is lost at night in a difficult country."

ANDREW MELROSE LTD., LONDON

942:3

ON FINDING ENGLAND

BY

HAROLD LAKE

AUTHOR OF
"IN SALONIKA WITH OUR ARMY"

D 7993.

LONDON: ANDREW MELROSE LTD.
3 YORK STREET, COVENT GARDEN, W.C. 2
1918

TO

MY WIFE

h
305

MSC
U401
MSC
U301.33

SHEPHERD'S BUSH.

Stock No. H1190

Class 942D LAK

Date —

THIS royal throne of kings, this scepter'd isle,
This earth of Majesty, this seat of Mars,
This other Eden, demi-paradise;
This fortress, built by Nature for herself,
Against infection and the hand of war;
This happy breed of men, this little world;
This precious stone set in the silver sea,
Which serves it in the office of a wall,
Or as a moat defensive to a house,
Against the envy of less happier lands;
This blessèd plot, this earth, this realm, this England,

. . . . . .

This land of such dear souls, this dear dear land,
Dear for her reputation through the world.

GAUNT in *Richard II.*

CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

PAGE

IN EXILE 1

1. MORITURI TE SALUTANT . . . 3

2 THE GARDEN AT SABA PACHA . . 20

3. THAT ENGLAND ENDURES . . . 43

4. OF A LITTLE CHURCH . . . 58

5. OF DREAMS IN EXILE . . . 71

CHAPTER II

THE ANGRY CHILDREN 85

1. THOSE WHO STAYED AT HOME . . 87

2. OF DESTESTABLE CITIES . . . 103

3. OF WOUNDING AND FORGIVENESS . 116

Contents

CHAPTER III

PAGE

THESE THINGS ENDURE . . . 135

1. Of Riding in Trains . . . 137

2. Our Goodly Heritage . . . 150

3. Concerning Beer 163

4. Our Ladies of Toil . . . 176

5. Of Kingship in England . . . 191

CHAPTER IV

KEEPERS OF TO-MORROW . . . 217

1. That we are not Afraid . . 219

2. Hedges and Motor-Ploughs . . 234

3. A Highway shall be there . . 249

4. The Possession of England . . 264

5. The Future is in Our Keeping . 277

CHAPTER I

IN EXILE

HAMMERSMITH

1. MORITURI TE SALUTANT

THERE came a moment when, the doctor having expressed his approval of the latest recruit to His Majesty's forces, a Bible was thrust into your hand and you were invited to repeat a form of thundering words: "I swear by Almighty God that I will be faithful and bear true Allegiance to King George the Fifth, His Heirs and Successors, and that I will, as in duty bound, faithfully defend His Majesty, His Heirs and Successors, in Person, Crown and Dignity against all enemies. . . . So help me God." You went out from the busy, paper-strewn recruiting office into a new world.

By the mere repetition of those words you had crossed the line which divides the soldier from the civilian. You did not belong to yourself any more. You had become subject to military law, liable to pains and penalties which are not recognised in the civil courts, bound to the observation of rules which would

have seemed foolishness yesterday. Far beyond this, you had set out on the great adventure of our time, and, as it is written, scales had fallen from your eyes. In that hour you saw England for the first time. You saw the centuries and the dull pages of history burning with a sudden splendour of life. You saw your home, and all the dear circumstance of your living had become sacred as the tabernacle of God. From the far side of the line which you had crossed you looked back, back at a desk in some little room, back at the accustomed faces of your friends, back into the eyes of your woman, and knew that between all these and yourself there had risen an impalpable, impassable barrier. Dearer than ever they were in that hour of awakening and departure, but for you there was no longer any choice at all. They had become remote and in a measure unreal. You must turn from them and face the long white road which leads to war. You had joined the great procession of those who through the centuries have marched down to the sea for England.

You perceived at that time something of what England is, and why it may be a good and seemly thing to die for England; and that, to

the normal man of our times, was an astonishing discovery. In the days before the war it was not customary to speak of patriotism, and many people were under the impression that the word itself was the name of something which was no longer serviceable, and had gone out of fashion except in certain political circles. Regarding—as most of us did—politicians as people divorced from reality, their use of the word made no impression on us; indeed its appearance in speeches and leading articles tended to convince us of the deadness of the thing. Also we were entirely ignorant of England.

Of course, we were not aware of our ignorance—though occasionally some chance word dropped by a poet made us wonder if there might not after all be something which we had not grasped. At all other times we considered ourselves authorities, if not experts, on the subject of England. We knew and occasionally cursed it as a country where the weather is nearly always vile. We were intimately acquainted with a house whose defects kept us grumbling all the year round, and with a job that seemed like unspeakable bondage. There was a golf club perhaps, and there were

a few seaside places. The newspapers made us aware of the names of other towns which were occasionally distinguished by strikes or murders ; and occasionally we had an accidental glimpse of a map of England, or necessity took us to a distant part of the country, to which we journeyed behind newspapers and magazines. In those days you could meet the spiritual brothers of the man who remembered Rome as the place where he bought the good cigars, in every train that ran upon our lines, and we stared with a kind of contemptuous amusement at the eager Americans who hurried from place to place revelling in the loveliness and the ancient splendours of this our land. All this is an old story, but it had to be mentioned for the sake of the illumination which came in that hour when, with the Oath of Allegiance fresh in the memory, one went home to complete the preparations for the new life.

In the years of peace, death seemed to most of us a very remote possibility. We were a little like the man in the Psalms who said "I shall never be cast down ; there shall no harm happen unto me." It would come to us eventually of course, but meanwhile we were in

possession of the years. . . . All that had been changed in the twinkling of an eye. Quite voluntarily, if a little blindly and unthinkingly, we had offered ourselves to a service of which death was a recognised part, and we had been accepted. It might very well be that we should never return to the life of yesterday morning, and realising that fact we began to see how dear and excellent that life had been. The perception widened till it took in all the length and breadth of England. We understood that all the men in khaki who thronged the streets shared this experience, that they too had left some little sacred house, some beloved, familiar way of life. This country, where we had gone about our business with so much disregard of others, became in a flash a very brotherly place. These innumerable irritating strangers were not strangers after all. The villages and towns at which we had glanced so carelessly from the windows of the hurrying trains were seen to be holy, and we were conscious of loveliness where in other days we had only seen dull ugliness. We understood now that England was covered with homes as dear to others as was our own place to us, and that from all these men were

going out with us, offering their lives also, taking the chance that they might not return.

And they were offering something more than life. That had been made plain even in the brief experience of the recruiting office. The last sacrifice might quite possibly be demanded presently, but liberty had already gone. There were various peremptory orders. In issuing his instructions, the recruiting officer was introducing us to the tone and manner of the Army. "You will do this . . . you will go to this place." There was no consideration of preference or of convenience. It was an order, and with the coming of the order came also the realisation of the fact that that liberty of which we had heard so much and thought so little had been taken away. At that hour we realised, perhaps for the first time, that hitherto we had been free.

So there was yet another surprise for us and a further lightening of our eyes. You know how it was in those other quiet years. On platforms, in Parliament and in the political press men spoke and wrote of freedom, even as they did of patriotism, with a kind of weary flatness, with little apparent conviction. We read or listened and were not impressed.

We quite understood that it was the sort of thing they were expected to say, and it did not mean anything in particular. If somebody—a Chesterton, a Belloc, a Nevinson—wrote on occasion with flaming sincerity in praise of freedom, we admired the performance without in the least understanding what was meant. Of course we were not slaves, but, on the other hand, there were few Englishmen who would admit that they were really free. "Do you call this a free country?"—you know that bitterly-spoken preface to some complaint against a petty, irritating regulation. And there were those among us who described themselves as wage-slaves, and others who protested that freedom must be dead in a country where you had to be at the office by nine in the morning. . . . And now, with the fetters upon us, we saw our old freedom in all its loveliness and excellence, a splendid and desirable thing which we had lost.

There could be no more accurate measure of the freedom of the English than the surprise and disgust which rise in the heart of the ordinary civilian when he finds himself subject to military discipline and military law. More-

over, that disgust persists. For my own part, with over three years of service behind me, I detest it as much as ever. I recognise its necessity, but I hate it with an intense sincerity. The regulations which deal with the shade of my collar, the crown of my cap and the stick I carry, are unspeakably irksome. The obligation of giving and returning salutes in the streets is a nuisance, and the rules which hamper and restrict the use of my spare time are a continual vexation. I might be in the Army for twenty years, but such trifles as these would still irritate and annoy me. They are little things, I grant, but they seem in their way to be sacramental. These things, together with dozens of similar trifles, have taught me more about England than I ever learned in all the days of peace.

As this irritation persists in me, so does it persist in tens and hundreds of thousands. Any company officer will know what I mean. You go to your office in the morning and the minor offenders are brought up for judgment. Silly little offences they are, and things of which—as you severely inform the offender—no real soldier would ever be guilty; but your heart knows quite well that the man before

you is not a real soldier, for all his three years' service, but just a bewildered civilian struggling still with his instincts.

I shall never forget one man, a friend of my own, who enlisted with me. We had served for six months in the ranks and I was applying for a commission. Our company commander wrote recommending me to the commanding officer, and in time the recommendation was returned to me. It concluded, as we are taught to conclude our letters in the Army, "I have the honour to be, Sir, Your obedient Servant." I showed it to my friend and he was furious. "What—call himself that damned old idiot's obedient servant!" he exclaimed, and I could never make him understand the inwardness of the matter. And later there was an officer who came into the mess after an unpleasant half-hour with the colonel. "Well," he said quietly, "thank God I shan't have to know him after the war, anyhow!"

If you take a youngster and put him into uniform before he has learned the names of anarchy and liberty or the difference between them, you can make a soldier of him, but it is another matter with the man over thirty.

If he is dull of understanding, he will get his conduct-sheet filled with a record of many stupid little crimes ; if he is quick to perceive and to realise, his behaviour will be good, but he will suffer and may quite possibly grow bitter. And the crimes of the stupid man and the suffering of the clever man are alike the token that we English are accustomed to be free.

Of course, I am not pretending that all these things and their implications were understood during those early days of one's life in the Army. It is true that one recognised freedom when it was so irretrievably lost, but I doubt if one realised all the extent of the loss, or all the beauty of the thing that was lost. These things do not come home to the mind all at once, and that, perhaps, is as well. The sacrifice might seem too great, the pain too keen to be endured. But at that time one did perceive that England stood for a freedom which was a beautiful reality, and it was good to know that though one had given up freedom it was in defence of freedom, since England is freedom.

There came another hour of clearer understanding, when at the end of long months of

training the cables were all cast loose and the transport went down to the sea. That is the time to know and worship England, when the ship is taking you away towards the immediate peril of death. She lies very green and beautiful, with hills and valleys that tell of quiet lanes and little happy towns. As one remembers the kindness and loveliness of the dead, so does one remember England at that hour.

We went down from ugly, busy Devonport to where Plymouth lay sacred with memories. The mind was made keen by pain. There had been the last dinner in the mess, the march to the station with the incessant bands, the scene at Paddington when the train jerked away from the crowded platform tearing apart so many who could never meet again—all this had made the frame of one of the major agonies. And now there was the widening strip of water, and the people who stood and waved and cheered on Plymouth Hoe were tiny and remote. More remote they were than the multitude of the unremembered dead who in their time set out on that same water for the sake of England. Somehow I was not thinking at all of the company of

those whose names are written in history. It was all of the little, common people whose names are forgotten, whose memory has perished. We were like them and they were like us. They served their generation and passed, so too should we; no name of all their names had endured, and so would it be with us; they did what they did unthinkingly perhaps, but because they stood for England, and so it was with us. They wrought and died and made England free, whether or not they knew what they did. We were going out to defend and to establish their work for ever.

You must not think that we who during these years of war have left these shores to fight for England have gone in any exalted mood. That is the privilege of the few heroic souls. Most of us are too concerned with our own affairs, too keenly aware of our personal pain, to reach those heights; many are dull, and many are purely seeking adventure. Yet at that hour there comes something, a swift light shining, a thought burning in the mind if only for a moment, a glimpse of the skirts of the vision.

You stand and look at England, a little,

green, receding land. You are not thinking at all of England as a mighty Power. You forget altogether the proportion of the map of the world which is customarily painted red. You forget all about the Empire on which the sun never sets, and the lordship of the seven seas, and all the other childish boastfulness which in the years of peace made us to be so sincerely disliked. You are thinking quite simply and lovingly of a little land.

Very, very lovingly. You can admire magnificence. You can wonder at it, respect it, feel proud of it, and perhaps worship it, but you cannot love it—which is, perhaps, the reason why some of us can only love God through loving His saints. So, while you were only a citizen of the British Empire you were able, upon occasion, to feel certain swelling emotions, but there could not be love. The British Empire was much too big to be loved, and on the whole it did not seem particularly lovable. Moreover, I do not think that it would occur to any one to die for the British Empire. Only the very largest sort of man could possibly dream of dying for an Empire, and most of us are such little people. But—there was England.

This is not a political tract that I am writing. I am not trying to preach any political gospel, to buttress any political faith. Those old quarrels have gone by the board in these years of war, and they do not matter any more. In common with very many of my generation, I have boxed the compass from Imperialism to red Socialism and back to a stark Toryism, but since then I have been to the war, and I am not in the least concerned with those old labels, and I beseech all those who have not been to the war to believe that I write with utter indifference to the old party divisions when I say that to me the great gift of the war to Englishmen seems to be the blasting away of that golden-coloured cloud of Imperialism and the discovery of England.

The writing of that paragraph brings an echo back across the years. There was the time when we spoke of the "Little Englanders." I really do not know what was the exact creed of the people to whom that name was given, and I am quite sure that I do not care. I will confess, if you like, that at the time I considered them rather less than the least of God's creatures and assisted other fervent youths to torment them exceedingly, but

that does not matter. The funny little disturbance which is called the Boer War is so far away, so immaterial beside the events of to-day, and the shibboleths of that time do not concern us. If any one is left over from that time who desires, by reason of what I have written, to call me a Little Englander I do not object, nor am I at all flattered. The term belongs to a dead language, a language which died in those early days of the August of 1914.

We, when we went out to fight, went for reasons the Imperialist of other days would probably have accounted insignificant. We went for the sake of a friend gone on before, for a bent old man, for a little house among the gentle hills, for the dear loveliness of a woman. Out of the heart of Europe had come a dark and poisonous cloud which threatened all that we held most dear with a horror unspeakable, and the agony of Belgium and France cried a warning while the Hun was forging the chains to bind the conquered lands. We went, whether we realised the fact or not, because we were accustomed to be free, and because tyranny was reaching out its hands to threaten all the life which we had

known. We went each for his England, his little England.

I do not want to suggest that I was thinking all these things as the old *Tunisian* drew away from Plymouth on that Sunday afternoon. One does not behave in that fashion unless one is a singularly self-conscious kind of poet. To be sure, I looked at England for quite a little while, but long before she was out of sight I was in the smoking-room considering such weighty problems as whether or not to double three no-trumps. It is long afterwards that one realises what was really happening in the secret places of the mind on these occasions.

But whenever I think of that afternoon there comes that vision of this little land of ours. So small it is among the nations of the earth. So tiny a space it covers, so needful it seemed of all that all its sons could do. There was the memory of all those forgotten people of whom I have written, and below me were the crowded decks of the transport. Each had left his own particular bit of that England. None of us might see those shores again.

Morituri te salutant. We are going away,

but it is well. We have seen you as we never saw you before, and we know you for what you are. By the tokens of our bondage we know the freedom for which you stand. We understand quite well that it is good for us to go if only you may endure to cherish freedom for the world. *Morituri te salutant.*

2. THE GARDEN AT SABA PACHA

YOU know those maps of the world which used to appear—and for all that I know do still appear—on one of the early pages in every school atlas. They were described as being "on Mercator's projection," and they bore the legend, "British Possessions coloured Red." I do not know who started the idea of splashing red about those maps, but I am altogether certain that his notion has very much to answer for, and has, perhaps, done more towards the shaping of history during the last thirty or forty years (including all these years of war) than any notion let loose upon the world by any other person. And it is not possible to believe that he has any claim on our gratitude.

To the instructed, of course, such a map could never be misleading. The educated man looks at it and takes it for what it is worth. He knows the difference between

Crown Colonies and Protectorates and self-governing Dominions. He does not see a dead level of redness spread over all those incarnadined territories. He sees a few of them as very red indeed, others as faintly pink, and others again in the process of changing from red to some different colour. His knowledge of history and his study of passing events make it possible for him to put perspective in the place of this extraordinary flatness, and the map cannot possibly do him any harm. But the educated man who has kept his knowledge up to date is a very rare individual in all classes.

Surging around him and the little company of his fellows are the millions of the half-educated and the uneducated and of those who, having been instructed in the beginning, have never troubled to keep step with the march of the world. To such as these the red-stained maps have been a peril.

The child at school understood that " British Possessions coloured Red " was an exact statement. Here and there a schoolmaster may have endeavoured to explain and to qualify that statement, but he was defeated before he began. There was the map, so clear and

definite, and all those red countries were ours. India was ours and Australia and Egypt and Canada. The Boer War gave us the Transvaal, and changed the name as well as the colour of the Orange Free State. There was the talk of the "All-Red Route," and there was the vision of the railway which was to run from Cape Town to Cairo on British territory all the way. The future citizen grew up in an atmosphere which suggested that it was the chief duty of a Briton to add to the redness of the map. When he was old enough and sufficiently established to approach the ballot-box, there were swarms of politicians only too eager to preach the same gospel to him. Imperialism was everywhere—in the papers and the books, in the pulpit and on the stage and on the platform, and in hundreds of popular songs. And at the back of it all was the map with its flaming proclamation of the unutterable might of the British Empire, and the relative unimportance of every other nation in the world. There were little statistical diagrams concerned with square miles, population and wealth, all working to prove the same thing—that all the desirable portions of the earth were ours already or

soon would be. Ours was the might, ours the majesty, ours the dominion, and all that the other nations could do was to enter into a jealous trade rivalry with us. We permitted that with a kind of lofty condescension, cherishing in our hearts the conviction that if we chose we could stop the little game in a night by adopting Imperial Preference.

Looking back on them now after these years of war, one can perceive quite a number of startling insanities in those old political arrangements of ours. For downright queerness there are few recorded blunders to compare with that which allied conservative Roman Catholics in Ireland to Radical Nonconformists in England. And for grim humour what can compare with the fact that the party which preached the might of the Empire was, a little later, to be the party which had to plead with England to arm herself against the coming peril ?

And that, as we all know, was the case. One direct result of Joseph Chamberlain's campaign was to make England very conscious and very proud of the Empire. There had never been such an Empire. It girdled the world and ruled the seas, united and impreg-

nable. When the apostles of Empire began a few years later to talk about conscription (under various fancy names), England was naturally incredulous. Why should we have a big army? We had our Navy, and—what about the Empire? Who would dare to touch us? We had learnt one lesson too well to be able to learn the other. It was not the outcry of the pacifists which defeated the movement for conscription in England; it was the comfortable assurance in the heart of the average Englishman that the Empire was too big to be attacked. The red-stained maps had done their work. We were, so we thought, so strong that we had no need of armour. Our Navy was there to keep the other nations in order, and what need was there of anything further?

And who can tell what the result would have been if we had paid heed to those warnings, if we had furnished ourselves with an army, if the Hun had known that behind the wall of our fleet there lay a force trained, mobile, and powerful? What might the difference have been?

. . . . . .

There was a Sunday afternoon a fortnight

after my arrival in Egypt when I sat out on that excellent balcony of the Khedival Club in Alexandria considering this business of Empire and the redness of the map and some kindred matters. Egypt, I remembered, was painted a glowing crimson, and so was Australia. I had been experiencing Egypt and Australians in generous measure, and I was beginning to feel ashamed of those maps. (And I may say here that I continue to be ashamed of them.)

I want to state, and to insist as strongly as I can, that the rulers of England in the past have not only failed to realise how uneducated the people of England are, but have also striven successfully to rob that little education of value and significance. I do not say that they set to work with any dark designs deliberately to do this thing. It is simply that they subordinated the needs of political parties to accuracy. On one side and on the other they dealt in half-truths, and the Press was little better than the politicians. Little if any chance was given to the average man to distinguish between the various shades of redness on the map. If the ordinary Englishman of pre-war days had got hold of an average

number of the *Sydney Bulletin* it would have filled him with incredulous dismay. If he had studied some of the vernacular Egyptian papers, they would have convinced him that the Empire was falling to pieces. And this, not because the papers in question misrepresented things so much as because they had been misrepresented to us at home. "British Possessions coloured Red!" Surely there never was a race so unfortunate in its choice of words as our own. I am not, I hope, more cowardly than the majority, but I do not think I should ever have the pluck to tell a large and fierce Australian that his country was one of the possessions of Britain.

And there was Egypt. I had just returned from the Fayoum and I was rather full of Egypt, and I was not feeling in the least like a member of a triumphant ruling race. We have accomplished many things in Egypt. We have harnessed its great river and made the desert fertile. There are the canals and the little ditches bearing witness, spreading out like magic fingers with power over the wilderness. The civilisation of to-day has sent its machinery and inventions to serve this old land, and the Nile barrage will stand

to be the memorial of our generation; and yet, for all the material revolution which we have accomplished, the land remains untouched. Once you get away from the coast and the great cities, that fact is made plain. You sit at ease in the flying train and you realise after a while that here is a country which has not forgotten the Pharaohs. Presently you are walking the streets of some remote little town and you know yourself for an alien.

The political Egyptian, the half-educated product of the great towns, tries to fight us with Western weapons. He writes for rebellious little papers; he agitates and generally behaves in an entirely familiar fashion, but his brothers of the distant villages and towns do not condescend to take so much trouble over us. They prefer to ignore us and to go their way in silence. I imagine that they are largely indifferent to the ravings of their noisy countrymen. They watch our coming and going with calm, contemptuous eyes, and as you go about your business you become aware of an indifference too cold and deep to be ignored. . . . It is a curious experience to feel yourself being despised by a people whom you had been

taught to regard as your inferiors, to realise that they do not respect or admire you in the least, and that their whole attitude is one of waiting till you shall have passed and ceased to trouble them.

So I sat on that high balcony, watching the square below with its blazing flowers and crowds of gaily dressed women and swarthy, sauntering men, and readjusted my ideas of the Empire and of those "possessions" of ours. There were the Australians to be considered as well as the people of Egypt. In those days we had not realised the Australian point of view, and it really seems as if our rulers—who should have known a great deal better—shared the delusions about Empire which they had implanted in the hearts of the people. At all events they regarded the Australians as forming one force with our own men, and proceeded to act on that assumption. The Australians did not approve of being treated as if they were only another variety of Englishmen, and they set to work to demonstrate their disapproval, to such an extent that during certain hectic months they made themselves detested in Egypt. There is no need to go into details, but it is

necessary to point out that at that time the Australian troops were a constant source of trouble by reason of their determination to make plain their entire independence of British rule.

Looking back on it now I cannot help realising that once more those maps were to blame, in no small degree. If we had not been suffering so severely from that obsession of Empire, we should have handled the Australians differently. We should have realised, as we do realise now, that they regarded themselves as Allies, and we should have treated them as a distinct force, and we should have been spared a great deal of trouble. But I suppose that trouble was necessary in order that we might learn that Australia is not a British possession, and that the links between the two countries must be sought in something apart from any idea of ownership or dependence.

Presently I left my balcony and found a tram which put me down in time at the station called Saba Pacha, where I sought for a place of which I had been told. In a little while I found it, the Convent of the Sacred Heart, and passed through the fine cool building into

a very wonderful garden where in the shade of hibiscus, oleander and palm there were quiet, happy beds of such violets as I might have found in any garden in England. It was a home-coming.

Within those walls there was England. It did not matter in the least that the trees were strange and many of the blossoms exotic, or that there were bananas for the gathering, or that a hearty colony of bull-frogs occupied the pond at the end of the tennis court. Those things were only the frame of the picture—a picture that was composed of beds of violets, of rose-bushes of long-beloved varieties, of all sorts of happy little plants that grew in shady corners and whispered of the lanes of England, of woodland and of hedgerow. And that the point might not be missed, there were some very English soldiers strolling round the shaded paths, pointing out to each other the changes which a week had made, exactly as they might have done in each other's gardens on any Sunday evening at home. For all their uniforms of khaki drill, for all the alien circumstance of their living, they were just Englishmen behaving in the accustomed fashion of Englishmen, and it was comforting

to watch and listen to them after experience of those violent Australians and of the silent Egyptians living their secret life behind the bulwark of the eternal sand.

I cannot tell how many of us have known and loved that garden. Of course, in the first place it was commonly found only by Catholics. We were told about it at Mass on Sunday mornings, and we went to the convent because it was something to do. But having been there once, we went again and took others with us. There was a room for reading and writing, and there was the garden. Any who chose might attend the service on Sunday evening, but there was no sort of compulsion nor any attempt to exclude from that happy place those who did not call themselves Papists. It was there for the comfort of any soldier who cared to make the journey from the hot, dusty camps at Sidi Bishr, and on any evening in the week you would find little knots of us wandering round the paths; and if at times we were feeling very, very homesick, that was entirely our own affair, and there was no one to ask questions or to make devastating experiments in consolation.

I have written of this garden because it

stands in my memory as one of the pictures typical of my race, because it was one of the places where I saw England quite clearly, the England in which I believe, the England which shall endure when all the confusion of our generation shall have passed away. You may retort that all I appear to have seen was a number of Englishmen walking round a garden and telling each other how much the onions had grown in a week. I suggest that any one who has seen as much as that has already seen a very great deal of England.

By their works you may know them. The Roman passing beyond his borders flung the long straight roads across the earth, building fortified places to protect them. The Spaniard in the day of his power made himself palaces, took to himself slaves and store of precious and beautiful things that he might go splendidly back to his own place. The Englishman has always been concerned to make a garden where he might enjoy in freedom the results of his own labour. In the course of years, under the coercion of conditions in a strange land, that old instinct may be modified and even forgotten, but it is always present in the beginning. He may go to the new

country as a trader, but the garden is inevitable. He wants to have a place of his own, with a little piece of land around it where he may make things grow, and watch and tend them from seedtime to harvest. There is the desire in his heart, persisting in all the opposition of circumstance. And you will remember that even our most un-English Englishmen, our princes of commerce and industry, do commonly grow weary at the last of the alien pursuits of their life and retire into the country to spend their last days in fussing round their estates—which is only a more expansive way of watching onions growing in a garden. Back in my tent at Sidi Bishr I was pondering once more over those arrogant maps. . . .

It is certain that the return of peace will find us with a set of ideas about Empire utterly unlike anything which could have been imagined in the spring of 1914. It happens that before I sat down to my writing this morning I was reading in the day's papers of the urgent necessity for Japan to take action in Siberia (this is March 4, 1918), and that in itself is intensely significant. We white people used to believe quite furiously that the whole earth existed to be our estate and possession.

The fact that we are not fitted to live in many parts of the earth did not trouble us at all. It was to be for us to enjoy the fruits of it, to hold dominion over it, to draw from it all kinds of profit and revenue. We talked also about the Yellow Peril, and were vastly disturbed because some of these alien races persisted in objecting to our rule. And now, almost in an hour, all that is at an end. When the Hun purchased Lenin and Trotsky and set out on the march to Petrograd, he sealed Asia to the Asiatic for ever.

We have been so worried about Japan, and I confess to as great disturbance of mind as any one. We have seen that strange, secret nation grow in power and wealth and enterprise. We have realised that its millions must find space wherein to live and scope for their energies. We have feared for those distant "possessions" of ours. In Australia and in America there has been something not distinguishable from dread. While our policy recognised Japan as an ally, our heart has been unhappy. We were anxious, too, about India, and about our trade in the Far East. All our actions were a tangle of compromise and concealment, and we had been drawn into

an almost intolerable medley of thought over the whole question of the alien races. And now that confusion has been cleared away for ever.

You may juggle with the map but you cannot juggle with geography. You may proclaim empires, Crown colonies, and protectorates to any extent which your ambition may dictate or circumstances permit, but you cannot colonise the torrid zone from the temperate. In a little while the lie will be unmasked and the pretence swept away and the old order will reassert itself, while the tide of invasion withdraws to its own borders. No one may tell how long this would have taken to happen in Asia if it had not been for the necessities of the war, but no one who watched the signs through the opening years of this century can doubt that it would have happened, that in the end the Asiatic races would have taken possession of Asia, and that we of the West should have been compelled to recognise the sovereign rights of the East, with all that such recognition implies.

It is accomplished now. Japan is to safeguard Siberia, chiefly because she alone can undertake and carry out the task. Her armies

are to hold that land against the West for the sake of the West. The Kaiser has spoken so often of the Yellow Peril, and now he has brought the Yellow races to their throne. By his own action he has established the East in power and given it a place which it can never lose. It is no part of my present purpose to make guesses about the future of Asia; it is only necessary at this time to point out that White domination in that continent has come to an end. Lancashire will be the first to realise the fact, if she does not realise it already, and she will do well to make her plans accordingly. Her cotton trade will never regain that position in the Eastern markets which it held before the war, or anything approaching to that position.

All these things were, of course, dim in the future on that June evening of 1916, yet their outlines could be discerned by any one who had been looking at Egypt and England side by side. It was clear enough that the tropic countries are impossible as habitations for the Englishman, and clear also that he could retain place and influence in them only so long as and in so far as he served them. Those silent, disdainful people had a certain need

of us. It required our skill and resource to harness the Nile and to make the desert fertile, to establish means of transport and to provide various desirable things, but after all our position in their land was only that of servants. We might be exceedingly well-paid servants with power to make our own terms, but we were nothing more. I had an uneasy feeling at the time that if we were not necessary we should very soon be evicted. Looking at the matter quite dispassionately, it does not appear that we shall be permitted to retain power in any of these alien lands when once the people have learned to do for themselves those things which we at the present time are accustomed to do for them. I do not suggest that we shall be turned out in any violent or obvious fashion; it is more likely that we shall be gently but very patiently and inexorably thrust aside, while the old owners of the land take matters of industry and finally of governance into their own hands, till presently they emerge as sovereign States.

They will emerge with power. I turn once more from Egypt to Japan in the position which she has gained to-day. It is possible that centuries will have to pass before the full

effect of Germany's present action can be measured, but in the meantime there are indications which no one can mistake. The present need is to keep Germany out of Asia, and one immediately thinks of the Ural Mountains as a boundary which, in time to come, may possess a greater significance than ever before. Now it happens that over 90 per cent. of the world's supply of platinum comes from the Urals. Platinum, so far as we know at present, is the only metal which has a coefficient of expansion equal to that of glass, and it is therefore indispensable for countless purposes connected with the harnessing of electricity to the service of man. It is not too much to say that the people who control the platinum supply of the world must also control in no small degree the destinies of the world. If, then, the Asia of to-morrow is to control this indispensable thing, how shall we be able to deny the right of Asia to be heard when the peoples of the earth are speaking together ? And platinum is only one of the many things which are in the very foundations of life as we know it to-day. In so far as we have levied tribute from all the world we have made ourselves

dependent on all the world, and the time is not far off when we must pay the price of that dependence.

. . . . . .

There are, then, those emerging races on the one hand, and those new nations repudiating our control and claiming equal rights of sovereignty with us on the other, and between the two is the Englishman with his heart in a garden. I am aware that to very many this will seem a fanciful—if not a farcical—statement of the position, but I believe that if the matter is considered carefully it will be found that it is not so very fanciful after all. We have to rid ourselves of the tangle of words and phrases with which we used to conceal facts in the days before the war, and to see things as they are. Can any one deny that the races which we used to consider our inferiors are now coming into power? Can any one deny that the new nations beyond the seas are determined to control their own destinies? Can any one assert that we have the means to prevent or to hinder either of these developments? Have we shaped our conduct in the past in any such fashion as to give us the power to say on one

hand or on the other, "Thus far shalt thou go"?

Before the war there might have been some argument as to the correct answer to the last two questions, but there can be no argument now. Supposing for the moment that we have the desire to impose our will on those others, we shall be, when peace is signed, in no condition to do anything of the sort. But it is not possible that we shall be wishing so to act. By their allegiance and aid in this time of our necessity the new nations of our own race have won the right to speak on terms of equality with us. They are not children any more, and it is not in the least likely that they will consent to be treated like children. And those other emerging races have also stood with us in the fight, so that it would be more than unseemly for us to turn against them when they claim their reward.

And beyond all else there is the fact that the heart of the Englishman is not set upon conquest. I am aware that this statement is in flattest contradiction to the old popular ideas, but I doubt very much if any one will deny it at this time. In our youth we have loved and sought adventure, and we have

sought it in many lands, but the adventure has always ended in the building of a home and the planting of a garden. And those wars of ours which have seemed like wars of conquest have always been fought to protect some distant home. We made this thing which we used to call the Empire by the simple process of putting a hedge round a little bit of a far country and fighting in the cause of self-defence when the original inhabitants wanted to turn us out. We are a simple people and easily led, but I defy any one to prove that there would have been any popular enthusiasm behind the last Boer War if it had not been generally understood that President Kruger was persecuting a number of perfectly harmless Englishmen. That we know to-day was not the cause of that unhappy war, but the belief made its beginning possible and secured its victorious end.

Anything less like a conquering race than those soldiers who wandered round the garden at Saba Pacha you could not imagine. They were not in the least interested in the redness of the map of Egypt. At home, during an election and under skilled guidance, I do not doubt that they would have cheered joyously

over that same redness, but here on the exceedingly alien spot they were not concerned about it; it is unlikely that they even remembered it, and if you had gone to them and told them that Egypt belongs to us they would have been merely puzzled. But their hearts were troubled with no such ideas. They had come to the end of another week of toil; they had found a garden with plants which were their dear friends, and they were busy being happy about those plants. In other words, they were busy being English.

HAMMERSMITH
PUBLIC LIBRARIES

3. THAT ENGLAND ENDURES

WE have been warned continually by the prophets of gloom that our glory must decay and our splendour perish. They have pointed to the empires of the past, how they arose and reigned and declined. Our own Empire, they declared, must suffer the same fate, and they professed to see signs that the doom was at hand. We were decadent and ripe for destruction. Some younger, cleaner Power must rise and cast us down. . . . The German, with characteristic faith in his own cleanliness, comforted himself with their words, and toiled furiously to create the mechanism of destruction.

It is possible to feel a little sorry for the German. He had so much in common with the hero of a certain immortal poem who thought he saw an elephant that practised on the fife. He was so sure that there stood in his way a detestable monstrosity called the British Empire. In his thorough, painstaking

way he read all the histories and collected and indexed all the signs of the times. His spies sent voluminous reports from all the corners of the earth, and his professors worked out all the sums and got the answers wrong—as wrong as those must whose innocent minds recognise no difference between the signs of plus and minus. The answer which they gave to the problem was that the mighty British Empire, held together for so long by brute force, was now in the article of dissolution. All her Colonies were preparing to cut themselves adrift; India and Egypt were alive with sedition; Ireland was in a state of open rebellion, and Britain itself was torn with dissension. One hearty blow, so they asserted, and the bubble would burst and the fragments would lie at the disposal of the deserving German race. They failed to remember that when a bubble bursts there remains nothing but a drop of unprofitable moisture, and unluckily for them they were entirely right in concluding that the British Empire was a bubble.

It is not unlikely that future generations will decide that the British Empire was the biggest hoax that has ever been carried

through on this earth. It is unfortunate that the study of history is not one of our strong points, and that our generations are apt to live in watertight compartments, regarding not at all the thing which preceded their coming into the world. If it were not for this it would be possible to remind the people of to-day that half a century ago we had not heard of the Empire, nor had we been exhorted to think imperially. We have grown up with the idea of the Empire. It was in all the books from which we acquired information at school. The geographies put it first and left a few odd pages at the end for the rest of the world. The volumes which we were told contained history proved nothing unless it was that we had been Empire-builders from the beginning. The idea of a few imaginative and eloquent politicians passed into the texture of our common thought, and into the texture of the thought of the world. People talked and in the last resort they acted as if the British Empire really existed. The Germans believed in the British Empire even more sincerely than we did, and on that rock they have been wrecked.

For as a matter of literal fact, there

never was any such thing as the British Empire. Once upon a time we tried to make an Empire for ourselves, and the founding of the United States was the result of that piece of foolishness. Since then our actions have been informed with a greater wisdom, and we have not tried to behave imperiously to our relations beyond the seas. India, of course, will be quoted against me, but the reply is plain; even in the case of India we are among the people as those who serve. All the mechanism of our rule in India is a mechanism of service. It may be objected that many of the people were not in the least anxious to be served by us, but that does not affect the point. We thought that we knew what was good for them better than they knew themselves, and so we insisted on serving them. It may have been most unpleasantly priggish of us, but that is the explanation of our permanent place in India. The toil of our administration in India has been spent on endeavours to improve the conditions of life for the people of India, and our men have died in fighting to protect those people. I do not contend that our actions have been invariably right and wise and beautiful, but

I do insist that behind them all there has been the idea of service, than which no idea could be more foreign to the German mind.

With regard to the rest of our "Empire" the case is clear almost beyond need of demonstration. It is true that we supplied figureheads for the machinery of government, sending out viceroys and governors-general and the rest, but no one in his senses having knowledge of the facts could claim that that proved that we exercised any dominion over those nations. They governed themselves. They made their own laws, levied their own taxes and, if it pleased them, raised and trained their own soldiers. They paid no tribute to us. There was not even any organised system of trade preference, and in many cases their tariffs were as powerful against our manufactures as against those of any other nation. If you look only at the facts and not at the glittering dream-palace which was raised by Joseph Chamberlain, the Earl of Meath and the rest, it is hard to imagine anything less like an Empire.

Think for a moment what it would have been if Australia, Canada and South Africa had been under the German rule. There

would have been conscript armies in each of those States, bound to the direct, immediate service of the Kaiser. There would have been taxation on a uniform scale for military and naval purposes. There would have been the strictest commercial agreement between the outlanders and the fatherland, and there would most certainly have been prison for any journalist who took such liberties with Royalty as are habitually taken by the staff of the *Sydney Bulletin.* The distant lands would have been under the same iron discipline with Prussia, held in the same rigid obedience in peace and war alike, and their men would have been mobilised ready for instant action before war was declared. Separatist talk would have been regarded and treated as treason, and every detail of life would have been directed by Berlin. It might not have been a very happy state of things for the people concerned, but at least it would have been quite indisputably an Empire.

It can only be imagined that the Germans thought that our ideas of Empire were similar to theirs. Very probably they pitied us intensely for managing our concern so badly, and reflected that they could have done the

job ever so much better. And certainly the words of our public men, the tone of our Press, our popular songs and many of our books bore witness in favour of their view. It is not wonderful that they believed that we were trying to run an Empire on the only lines which they could have appreciated. We believed it ourselves, so many of us, and we said so, and all the time we continued to behave in a fashion which was in flat contradiction to our words, and builded better than we knew. War came to burst that glittering bubble. And now that it has vanished out of the air, the German, reaching out his hand for his reward, finds himself faced by a Commonwealth of Nations, whose heart is England.

. . . . . .

There are some experiences of the mind so great and so greatly happy that they cannot be the fate of one person only; they must surely come to very many others of the same generation, whose conditions have been similar to his own. And so I am quite certain that many will understand with remembrance what I mean when I say that it was an inexpressible relief to realise that the British Empire could never fall because it had never existed.

I had, in the superficial fashion of the time, accepted in other years the suggestion that the Empires of Rome and of Spain were cases parallel with our own. I was not entirely misled by the maps which showed our possessions in red, but something remained of the misconceptions gathered so easily if one was eighteen at the time of the Boer War. I did look upon those countries as being in a sense our property, and I did consider that they formed parts of a whole whose power and splendour were material. It seemed a fine thing that we should be so much bigger than anybody else; there was a spacious grandeur about it which seemed entirely right. And yet there were times when I was enormously troubled.

For history will not be denied. All the empires of the past have had their day and gone down into darkness. Not one of them has endured save as a name to give warning to the ages. Reason declared that it was impossible that we should escape that common fate. One could imagine no argument to prove that we should be exempt, and there were times when one hoped in a wistful yet rather cowardly fashion that the time might

not come till one had been forgotten in the grave. For it is hard for an Englishman to imagine anything better than England, and it could only seem that the decline of England would mean the rising of some evil power in the world. . . . You may perceive that even then I was confusing England with that other thing which I called the Empire, which at that time I believed to be an Empire.

There was, then, this trouble of the mind, and it was not possible to turn a deaf ear to those who foretold destruction. On the whole they had reason on their side, and there was an increasing temptation to agree with them. In that mood one could misunderstand the signs of the times as completely as did those German professors, and all sorts of trivial details became darkly significant. There were hours of depression when one made unpleasant plans of the dissolution that was to come, speculated over its progress and mourned at last over an England cast down and despised. There came the war to make an end of these ponderings. Action became necessary, and it was no longer possible to spend very much time in mournful contemplation. There were many new things to learn, and there was a great deal of sincere

hard work for the body to perform. In the midst of all this business the world went on its slow, undeviating way, and presently there came a pause when one could sit down and consider what had happened.

For most of us the first year of the war was too full for thought. High and low, rich and poor were all caught in a whirl of circumstance that made it impossible to step aside and consider, and our leaders had not any more time to pause and think than the rest of us. There was so much to be done. So many decisions must be taken, the results of which could not possibly be calculated. There was no time for the intense deliberation of the chess-player; the play must be as swift as that of the most reckless gambler, and the result was on the knees of the gods. It was a time when intellect went by the board and instinct and emotion held the reins. There were actions and reactions which will be traced and noted by the generations to come. We need not concern ourselves with them. It is enough that out of all the confusion there emerged certain definite, shining things, the chief of which is that, though the British Empire of our foolish imagining had never

existed at any time, there did and does and shall exist that Commonwealth of the Nations whose heart is England. When it came to be my time to realise this I experienced that great relief of which I have spoken, a joy which endures through all these days of trial. For there is the conviction, the sure knowledge that England shall not be destroyed but shall endure, that the glory of England shall not pass away.

We never had an Empire, but we had and have a very great multitude of people throughout the world who are content to stand with us to the death. From the first day of war there has never been a moment's doubt. From all the corners of the earth those whom in moments of great condescension we used to call our fellow-citizens have come freely to fight beside us. There has been no sort of coercion. All the old foolish talk about how we should rule the Empire died into a sudden silence at the beginning of August 1914. Consider how curious a time that was: We had spoken of ruling an Empire, but in that hour of necessity none of the people here at home so much as dreamed of telling the Empire what to do or of issuing orders to the people

beyond the sea. Instead we waited, waited with anxious hearts it may be, to see what they would do.

There was not long to wait. The cables were throbbing under all the seven seas with the words of valiant promise. We had not finished cheering in front of Buckingham Palace on that Bank Holiday evening, before those friends of ours were at work in the distant lands; there was not so much as a matter of hours between the opening of the recruiting offices, and the tramp of the marching men ran round the world.

That which emotion dictated at the beginning all subsequent consideration has confirmed. Since those earliest days there have been countless mistakes and misunderstandings and not a few tragedies. Here and there questions of policy and expediency have been raised; there have even been mean little quarrels and disagreements. But there has been no deviation from the course which was adopted at first, and those who stepped forward at the beginning are still with us in the fight and more powerful than ever. There have been such matters as that unpleasantness in Egypt of which I have written. Those incidents

were necessary, perhaps, that we might the more plainly realise our relation one to another, but they have in no degree affected the course of action of these our Allies. Not one of those nations has withdrawn from the conflict. To-day as in the beginning they are ranged on the side of England, in a service which is perfect freedom.

Since the time when we were described as a nation of shopkeepers all sorts of materialistic aims and greedy ambitions have been ascribed to us, and especially by our home-bred critics. It has been asserted that our every action is dictated by selfish motives, that we seek always our own profit and material advancement. Our enemies have constantly described the Englishman as an insatiable monster, reaching out grasping hands over all the earth; they have pictured the earth as suffering beneath our extortions; they have preached that it would be a virtuous act to remove the horror of our oppression from the peoples of the world. And there have been found men and women of our own race to echo those condemnations.

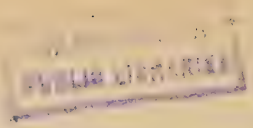
Their answer is written in the story of these years of war. It is written in the names

of those who have been content to suffer and to die by the side of Englishmen. They came under no compulsion of our making, but according to the will of their own people and of their own hearts. They did not come because they considered themselves subject to us, nor would they ever have come if in the past we had acted so as to suggest that we considered them subject to us. Simply because we had never made that suggestion, but had always left to them their freedom, they came and continue to come, proving to all our foes throughout the world that, whatever her faults, whatever her ugly failing may be, England stands first of all for freedom.

So it is that England endures and shall endure, preserved from the fate of those nations of the past because she has never sought to follow their example, because, in spite of all appearances and all the occasional folly of the nation, she made for herself a kingdom which was not as the kingdoms of this world. I do not pretend to know what the future has in store for this which we used to call the British Empire. I do not know what further measure of independence may in distant years be desired by the other

nations of our Commonwealth, nor do I greatly care to know. These things are only matters of form, and it is quite certain that under the form the spirit will remain unchanged. It would not disturb me in the least to hear of the election of the first president of the Republic of Australia, because I am entirely sure that, whatever she calls her ruler and whatever she puts into words about her relationship with us, Australia will always remain a member of this our Commonwealth.

And if in the years to come we do not put "British Possessions coloured Red" at the top of the maps of the world which we give to our children it will not be because this war has robbed us of anything at all, but because it has given us something finer and more splendid than any delight in territory, because it has shown us that we stand for an ensign to the nations.



4. OF A LITTLE CHURCH

ONE day I found a monastery in Alexandria. I could lead you to the place, but I could not describe its position so that you might find it for yourself, because I have forgotten the names of the streets around. I came to it on a hot and pungent afternoon, and as I stood at the door I was surrounded by modern Egypt. I passed through into a cool and shaded court which was quite plainly the home of those things which are eternal and untouched by the changes which trouble the earth. Of the monks I knew only that they belonged to one of those small bodies of the faithful who, dwelling in the East, are still in the communion and obedience of Rome. Of their monastery I did not learn so much as the date of its foundation; I know only that it is very old. A linguist of excellent intentions but limited abilities took me to the chapel and endeavoured to acquaint me with its chief glories, but that was no

part of my desire. In the end I contrived to make him understand that it would be to the advantage of the monastery if I was allowed to borrow the chapel for half an hour, so he went away and left me in that ancient and holy place.

All the things in this world are classified for all of us according to the standpoint from which we view them. They are beautiful or ugly, pleasant or unpleasant, useful or useless. All these and many other classifications are adopted by different people, and form a kind of rule of life. So you will find artists who spend their years searching for beauty and attempting to escape from ugliness ; the luxurious man is always concerned to avoid that which does not give him pleasure, and the ambitious man casts aside all things which do not serve his aims. My little church was there to proclaim that there is yet another way of regarding the world, to proclaim that things are either good or bad, and that no other classification has any importance at all.

In the years before the war all sorts of solemn people spent their time in being unhappy about England. They found every

kind of fault with her. She was rotten with every vice. Political integrity was as unknown as commercial morality. Over and over again they insisted that she was becoming decadent, luxurious and slothful. They were worried by industrial disputes and by the falling birth-rate. Some were grieved over our general failure to join the Territorials, and some by the size of the Naval estimates. London was compared unfavourably with the worst of the bad cities known to geography and to time. It was asserted that our villages were full of immorality. Statistics were compiled to prove that we were galloping to destruction, and—there is something humorous in the thought to-day—we were implored to look at Germany and to profit by her example! You will remember the things that we were told, how it was insisted that Germany was the home of thrift and industry and patriotism. The industrious, frugal German peasant was declared to be as great an improvement on our people as the German chemist was on our own. Our manufacturers, scientists, soldiers, and the people in general were continually implored to copy the German in all their ways and methods. German beer,

philosophy, music and medicine were all recommended to us, and there was a general atmosphere of suggestion that in every imaginable way the Teuton was the better man. I was remembering these things and all the time the lamp was burning before the tabernacle on the altar, burning for a type of that light by which one can tell the good things from the bad. I began to think of England as she was in that summer of 1914 when I saw so much of her, going about my business as a newspaper correspondent.

It is possible that there has never been so completely puzzling a nation as our own. Other people say what they mean, and do the things which they declare their intention of doing, and they do not deceive for any length of time any fairly intelligent observer. But the Englishman has an incurable weakness for deceiving everybody, including himself, and it is almost intolerably hard to tell what he will do until the moment of decision comes. He will talk for years in one direction and then act in contradiction to his words. I knew a man who was continually boring his friends with the praise of England, with feverish talk about the glory and splendour of being English,

and we supposed that he would be one of the first to enlist, but on one mean pretext and another he has remained a civilian through all these years of war. And I have known many others who used to preach internationalism and the brotherhood of nations whose graves are holy ground in France for ever. An Englishman will adopt a set of ideas, and argue about them and vote about them, and then go most cheerfully and willingly to die for something entirely opposite. He will grumble at and about you with the greatest sincerity for years and then give his life for yours; he will behave like a blustering bully and thereafter empty his pockets to aid the person he has been abusing. And especially will he set to work to prove himself a thoroughly bad lot, and follow that by writing his name among the names of the heroes. In spite of every appearance of evil, in spite of pride and stupidity and greed, there has remained in our people at the last that trick of classifying things as good or bad, and of choosing the good, just as surely as the Prussian determined that things were either useful or useless and must be chosen accordingly.

There came one dramatic moment when

the two principles were brought face to face. It was more than the opposing of two nations; it was the sacrament of all for which this war stands and shall stand for ever, when the German Chancellor on the 4th of August 1914 talked for twenty minutes to our Ambassador in Berlin about the ultimatum which we had delivered with regard to the violation of the neutrality of Belgium. He, the Teuton, could not understand why we should go to the war for the sake of a word. The Ambassador had to explain to him that the word happened to be the word of Great Britain, which could not be broken. Germany proceeded to do the thing which seemed useful in her eyes, declaring that necessity knows no law. And England began to ask the way to the recruiting offices.

I was asking myself whether one could have foretold these things, whether there was anything to show that in the hour of decision England would choose the right thing and Germany the thing which seemed to be expedient, and I was looking again at my country, considering its ways as I had known them, considering especially those happy, careless years of prosperity which were ours before the shadow came.

On Finding England

A nation is so large and so various a thing that it is possible to make of any nation a picture which shall prove anything about it. I could without difficulty bring evidence to demonstrate that the England of 1914 was at one and the same time atheistic and deeply religious, moral and immoral, brutal and humane. I have had the good fortune to know many parts of England and all sorts of people, and at that particular time I could have taken you, according to your desire, to monasteries, night clubs, impeccable suburban homes, the resorts of racecourse touts, the meetings of Socialist societies—to all sorts of contrasting places, all of which were a part of England. You might walk into the Manchester Exchange where hard-handed and harder-headed men spoke with authority of the use of wealth in a language which the Southerner could hardly understand without an interpreter, and that was England. In Canterbury Cathedral on the same afternoon some cultured and scholarly gentleman would read the lessons to a gathering of ladies before whom you must never say damn, and that was England. A little later in a garden at Wimbledon a handful of flushed and healthy youngsters

would be playing tennis with the heartiest appreciation and with no thought for to-morrow, and that was England. At the same hour another group of youngsters of the same age but with drawn faces and poor, mended clothes would be poring over books for the sake of the morrow, and that, too, was England.

Consider the nights. In the villages the taproom of the inn was clouded with smoke while the men sat with their beer, speaking a little now and then, but silent for the greater part; in their homes the worn and patient women still busy with the never-ending task of making a garment last for three years instead of one. Oldham, and the long bars of the places where champagne was sold at sixpence a glass, crowded with women with shawls over their heads and flushed faces and careless, ribald speech in their mouths. Clapham, with the boys and girls strolling to and fro, "getting off" with one another after the ritual of backward glances and repeated passing. Grimy halls where fervent men with red ties preached the coming of the Golden Age and the death of God. Theatres where comedy went delicately before the company of happy,

pleasant people. Houses where men and women knelt in hours of prayer.

All these were England. It was England, too, that slept in a million homes at midnight, or toiled in the glare of the furnaces, or wrote furiously in shirt-sleeves in newspaper offices, or streamed out of the Café Royal or the Elephant and Castle at closing time. It was England that went at midnight into the monastery churches, even as it was England that slipped furtively into some horrible hotel on the Euston Road. And I asked, Could it have been foretold that all this which was England would in the hour of decision choose to classify things simply as good and bad, and choose the good things at the risk of labour and wounds and death itself ?

I believed then, and I believe now, that these things could have been foretold by any one who had the courage to face the evil as well as the good, to look at England from every angle, hiding nothing, extenuating nothing, giving always credit where it was due, and refusing to be deceived by the appearance of evil. It has often been said that we are a hypocritical people, masking evil with the appearance of goodness ; but it seemed to me then and

in that place that our hypocrisy consists far more often in masking goodness by the appearance of evil. We are so afraid of being considered good, that we do our best to seem bad, reserving to ourselves the right to do the thing of which our deepest soul shall approve in the hour of decisive necessity.

Or you may put it, and indeed I prefer to put it, in another way. Evil we have been and done, but if you will consider you will find that we English people are never more than a generation or two away from God. Take whom you will, take the bully, the swindler, the procurer, and somewhere, only a little way back, you will find some man or woman who believed fiercely and utterly in God, in a living personal God to Whom supplication must be made at all times, Who was ready to hear and answer prayer. From that ancestry we have not been able to escape. By reason of it there remains to us that power of knowing good from evil, and that necessity which compels us in the end to choose the good with all its penalties.

That which has power in the case of the individual has infinitely greater power in the case of the nation. It is true that England

turned away from the Faith, and yet there has always remained in England some measure of the substance of Faith. Moreover, whether to affirm or deny, England has always been concerned about God and the things of God. And the man who is sufficiently concerned about God to take the trouble to deny Him, is far nearer to faith than the man who seeks to mould God according to the desires of his own heart and to make of Him—after the Prussian fashion—a tribal deity. When the Kaiser speaks, as at times he does, of "our German God," he is using words with an exactness which is not usual in his speeches. The God to whom he refers is a German God, made by German theologians and professors out of the fragments which German heretics condescended to leave of the Faith, and modified with the passing of the generations to suit the requirements of the Prussian military caste. There is no need to labour the point. According to the German Emperor, who appears to speak with authority, the German God approves of Germany. After you have said that, there is nothing more to be said.

When England turned from the Faith she did one wise thing. She denied the Church,

but she left the Bible. Indeed she insisted on the Bible. "Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation," said the sixth of the Thirty-Nine Articles, and through the centuries there has been the increasing effort to make the people acquainted with the Bible. Of course it led to confusion. With so complicated and contradictory a book as a foundation, people were bound to disagree, but the important fact remained that they were all disagreeing about the Bible and studying it the more furiously the more they disagreed. The founding of all the innumerable sects was due not to disapproval of the Bible, but to enthusiasm for the Bible. There was at least that fixed point, and in all the changing years the people of England have always been turning to those pages, studying them, pondering over them, praying about them. And that study and thought and prayer could not be in vain. They must and they did, and they will always lead to a measure of knowledge of truth. If a man takes the Bible and strives honestly and very humbly to learn what it has to teach him about God, he is bound to get hold of some of the truth. Of course, I know perfectly well that unless

he has also the Teacher to explain and interpret it for him he cannot arrive at the whole truth, but there will be in his heart and mind, directing his actions and shaping the course of his life, some true knowledge; and no man can do more than live up to the best that he has been able to learn.

And this is what England has more or less consistently done. I sat there in that little church, and there came the memory of all sorts of queer, vehement people whom I have known, of Baptists and Primitive Methodists and Plymouth Brethren who spent their lives in searching for knowledge of God, who sought to serve Him, and in that service served their generation. Weak they were, very many of them, harsh in their dealings and unkind. They were ignorant, blind and prejudiced; they did many things that were mean and miserable and unworthy. Yet their life was one long striving. So at the last they had their share in obtaining for England that in the hour of decision she should not falter, but should choose neither the pleasant nor the beautiful nor the useful, but the thing which was right.

5. OF DREAMS IN EXILE

THERE are so many fine things to be seen in this world and we, when we are young, sit dreaming over the maps, making for ourselves pictures of the glories of them. We read very greedily those books which tell us in vivid language of the distant places, and our eyes are hungry for the sight of them, and our souls for the experience of splendour. Those who have seen and known return and tell us that in the end the eyes grow weary and that it is better to be at home, but we are not able to believe them. Indeed we regard them with suspicion. There comes the thought that they are selfish; they have found something so wonderful that they wish to keep it to themselves. Or else we accuse them of dullness, and blame the chance which gave them the key to the door of the world while we were held at home. Our dreaming continues. Each chooses the land which his soul especially desires, and in longing

for the imagined beauty of that land all the familiar loveliness with which he is surrounded becomes unprofitable.

With the passing of the years the fever dies down. There come other interests and occupations for the mind. It may be that the business of securing food and clothing and shelter is all-absorbing; ambition may have awakened, or it may be, again, that the hungry eyes have found in the eyes of some other all that they can desire of adventure and of beauty. Presently we are in middle age, and we are not concerned any more to know how the whirlwind walks in the desert or how Olympus stands in the sky, or to know the tangled way of the mighty forests or the glory of the snow on great mountains. These things do not possess our dreams, neither to walk the leagues of a strange land with the stars for guide, nor to mark the way of the ship at blazing noon, nor to come where some white city of intolerable age is watching the generations. We have passed beyond the need of such matters and our souls have forgotten to be hungry. The world has become for us a place in which to live with as much comfort as we can attain, to work as little

irksomely as possible, and to take some kind of recreation on Sundays and holidays. For the time we have lost the dream and desire of loveliness, and though some live long enough to recover it in old age, yet for very many it never returns until a little while before the end, when quite ordinary houses and streets and gardens are frequently seen to be inhabited with beauty, and there comes a regret that they were never appreciated before. And life can bring only one sadder thing than this, that we should have to mourn our unkindness to the dead.

But if it is sorrowful that we should not learn of the excellence of our own land until it is too late, there is a thing which is far worse, which is, indeed, bad and horrible. And that is, that the curse of riches or some other evil accident should set one free to wander at will among the splendours of the world till the eyes and soul become surfeited and can no longer see loveliness anywhere, but must blame each place in turn because it is not some other place. When a man has learnt how to stand on Leith Hill on a day of mid-April explaining how infinitely inferior is the view to that which is to be obtained

from a certain height in the Rocky Mountains, the devil has not much more to teach him, nor has he much left that he can lose. And, on the other hand, that man is happy above all others who, standing in the heart of his own country, has confidence that here is loveliness which cannot be excelled. To very many of us it will be the great gift of the war that we shall always be able to look with open and rejoicing eyes at our own land, that there is no more discontent for us nor any unrest. For we have dreamed of England in exile.

And having received this gift from the war, we shall in turn become the gift of the war to England. That is a matter which has not yet been realised, but it will have a broad, increasing influence in the days to come as our men return from all the corners of the earth to take up once more the thread of their lives, to walk about the streets of their own cities. Then there will be seen in power the simplest and most elementary of all instincts, the desire to adorn that which is lovely and to glorify that which is sacred. When a man sees that a woman is fairer than all the daughters of men, his heart is yearning to obtain for her soft and delicate fabrics and jewels and

all manner of radiant things that she may go gloriously upon the earth, nor is there any desire more universal in space and time alike than that which impels mankind to make a beautiful house for God. So, too, has it been and shall it be in this matter of the land which is loved. When, in the days of old, men were conscious and passionate lovers of their countries, they were constantly striving to abolish every hint of ugliness so that their lives might match the excellent frame in which they were set.

We had forgotten the love of England. I cannot say that it was entirely the fault of many of us. For so many it had been made difficult to love England because stronger men had robbed England of loveliness. I have known so many dreadful towns, and though I am aware that even the ugliest of them are sacred, I do not see how any one could rejoice in their beauty. And when a man has spent his years in such a place as Widnes, I do not know how he can have any clear vision of the splendour of England. It is at least fairly certain that he would not go out of his house in the morning and look about him with joy, neither—and this is the really

important matter—would he be furiously angry if some one had put up an ugly hoarding at the end of his street or built a mean and shabby house opposite to his home.

And there was something more to trouble and to hamper us than the mere murder of physical loveliness which has gone hand in hand with so much of our industrial development. England has done some ugly public things which have tended to kill love in the hearts of her children, and the ugliest of them all has been her Poor Law, with the workhouses which stand in every district to remind the majority of us of the consequence and penalty of failure. Those buildings, and indeed the whole fabric of our national life, suggested increasingly that the only thing which we valued or recognised was a certain kind of material success, and they insisted that, in the public view, the only thing that could be done for those who were defeated was to build for them a prison. As the suggestion gained power, so did there rise bitterness in very many hearts. If at times there came on some rare holiday a vision of the excellent beauty of our land, there came also an increased bitterness because these things were so obvi-

ously reserved for the rich. There was a shadow across the home which darkened all the way of life, and made even the greatest of the universal adventures wretched. When with the utmost toil a man could not be sure of earning enough to share with his bride, when a woman must weep for the suffering of her unborn child, it is not to be expected that their hearts should be filled with love of their country.

Yet when the call came and the demand was made our people did not hesitate. A month before they might have protested, after the fashion of Englishmen, that they hated England, but when the recruiting offices were opened they were fighting to get in. Week after week and month after month they streamed up to those doors to offer life itself in defence of England. Presently when the demand was made imperative, those who sought for exemption were made to feel the need of apologising for themselves. Growing through all these years of war there has been the recognition in the hearts of men and women alike that we owe something to England. The bitterness of the other days has been put aside if it has not been forgotten, and

there is instead the record of tremendous, faithful service.

. . . . . .

And very many of us, as I have said, have dreamed of England in exile. We who had dreamed with longing of the other lands, were taken out to see them. A whole generation of us has been scattered over the face of the earth and held in the distant places. We had no choice in the matter. We went according to the orders, some to France, some to Gallipoli, to Egypt, to East and West Africa, to India, Mesopotamia, Macedonia. We were shown the kingdoms of the earth and the glory of them, and then we were made to realise that it was our business to endure that glory for months and possibly for years, and our souls grew weary of the alien splendour while our eyes learned to ache for the comfort of the little green land under a grey sky.

I have told how some of us used to go to a garden in Egypt to look at plants which we knew. Later on, in a country still more splendid, I found something else which was at one and the same time a joy and a stabbing pain because it spoke so clearly of England. In Macedonia in the beginning of the autumn

I came to the place called Janes, and there in a narrow and exquisite valley I found acres of brambles loaded with blackberries all growing as wildly and luxuriantly as if they had been set on the border of one of the woods in Kent. Piled above and around their dwelling were the great hills where grandeur was draped with loveliness. Behind them, as I knew well, were wonderful mountains, smooth and shaded meadows, a tangle of little, happy streams—all those things which make a land famous through the world for beauty. I thought of Macedonia as I had known it, of Kotos rising out of its forests into the sky, of Langaza which lies so broad and peaceful in its valley, of the great prospect which lies before you when you stand high on the hills above the Struma, of the raging splendour of the lightning among the peaks of the Bela Sitza. During my time in the country I had been surrounded by the best that this earth can show to delight the eyes, and now I had found this valley with its blackberries and it was worth more than all the rest. It was better to stay there looking at those tangled bushes than to pay any heed to all the wonderful country around. For in that valley there was a little dream of

my own country and of all the land I know. I might have passed through such brambles as those into a wood of ash and hazel and chestnut and beech till on the far side I came to the broad fields white with the glistening stubble which fell so gently to some remembered valley where the trees, radiant with the coming of the gold, sheltered the red roofs of the homes of my own people. There came so deep a longing that no words can describe it, and desolation possessed the soul as the eyes turned to the tormenting magnificence of that alien land. The woods and the fields and the little lanes were very far away, nor was there any promise that presently I should return or know again that rest which comes to those who may stand and look at England.

Long after the day when I found those blackberries in Macedonia there came the morning when from the deck of a great ship that ploughed through a turbulent sea I saw my country again. It was bitter weather, and there were swift storms of rain which flung a curtain before it time and again, but always the wind tore the curtain apart, that I might see it once more as I had dreamed of it, a

little green land under a grey sky. Later they put me in a train that went thundering through the night down half the length of England, and the comfort of that journeying is a possession for ever. After a while I was allowed to go where I would for certain days, and there came in that time a joy which no passing of time or broadening of experience has had power to diminish. There grew to life something not far from worship, so that all the land became and was clearly seen to be sacred.

It will remain sacred for ever unless the memory of this generation passes from the minds of men. Consider all those who have fallen. They went to play their part in this great business of our time. It is not necessary to claim that they went as heroes or as saints ; it is enough that they went. In the time of their bondage beyond the seas it is not to be doubted that their hearts were turning very often to England, for there is something which is dear to every man, whether it is a cottage, or the face of a girl, or a space of open land, or only a little, friendly dog. They thought with longing and with pain of those things which they had left, and presently death took

them so that they will never return any more. They may not have been very clever or kind or pleasant, and perhaps in other days they were not very useful citizens, but they loved some little bit of England and they left it for ever.

If you have known anything of the hearts of our men serving beyond the seas you cannot be indifferent to any part of England. It may not appeal to you, but that does not matter. The place which appears to you to be nothing but a nasty little village is dear to the dreams of some who are held in that distant bondage. They are thinking of it as they never thought in all the days of peace, and their hearts are longing to walk down its ugly street and to enter, it may be, the meanest of its cottages. And you may be very sure that some who loved the place will never return. There was the day when they left it, and there were the days of training and of the early service overseas when their thoughts returned to inhabit the place and watch its accustomed life. Time passed and it lived ever more clearly in their minds, and they made little plans for things that should be done after the war, designing very often some

more excellent way of life. They dreamed of it also with that longing which only those who have experienced it can ever understand, and they were taken in the midst of their dreaming. We who knew them, who lived with them, who shared their longing and their dream shall not forget.

. . . . . .

Many of us have returned already, and presently there will be very many more. We shall come, as I have said, set free from that restlessness of youth, cured of that longing for the distant lands, seeking England only, knowing that there is for us no other home upon this earth. Whether we come from the splendour of the countries that are very far away or from the loud desolation of the French front, we shall be returning to the home of our dreams, to that place for which we have longed, whose loveliness we have realised in exile. We shall come and we shall see it all with new eyes.

As we shall rejoice in its loveliness, so shall we hate its ugliness. It is useless to think that we shall return to slip back into the old ways of life and to go once more as we went before these years of exile. The hearts that have

learned to love have learned also to hate. We went from an England which we did not know. Beyond the seas we made great and shining discoveries about it, and found that love in our hearts. But you must not expect that returning we shall look with the old, indifferent eyes on the things which have defiled this land, or that we shall patiently contemplate the continuing of those things. When we went it was to stand between England and that tide of the hideous and the obscene that had risen up against it; it is not to be expected that if we find hideous things here in England we shall be content to tolerate them.

HAMMERSMITH
PUBLIC LIBRARIES

CHAPTER II

THE ANGRY CHILDREN

HAMMERSMITH
PUBLIC LIBRARIES

1. THOSE WHO STAYED AT HOME

THERE is a vast amount of spare time in the soldier's life, and especially when he is serving beyond the sea. To set against the occasional period of furious toil and peril, he has the long hours when there is nothing to do but wait for something to happen. Some way of filling those hours must be found, and the easiest of all is reading. Books and papers are scarce, so they are read very carefully and with the closest attention so long as they will hold together, and one reads all sorts of extraordinary stuff which would never receive a glance under ordinary conditions. With particular interest does one read the little local papers which tell of the events of the people at home, of the work and the play, the sorrow and rejoicing which are going on in the old place. That is the sort of reading which appeals to every one; the papers are passed from hand to hand, and the news is

discussed far more gravely and thoroughly than any of the tidings of war. We know all that we wish to know about the war, and we are very tired of it. But the local papers bring us real news of the people who move in familiar streets, whose names and faces we know, and we read every scrap, including the advertisements. And, above all, we read the reports of the proceedings of the local tribunals.

Right back at the beginning it was made plain that some would go to the war by hook or by crook, and that some would use every means of keeping away from it. There were weaklings who went time after time to the recruiting offices till at last they contrived to slip past the doctor. There were others who, with a better grasp of the matter than most of us, realised that the war was likely to be a long business, demanding the service of millions, and they made their own mean preparations. By the time that service was made compulsory many of them had established themselves in secure positions, but some had not been quite so successful, and they found themselves called upon to appear before the tribunals to explain why they should be exempted from bearing arms. I wonder if they ever realised

how vast was the audience before which they stood, or if they grasped the fact that their pleas and excuses were to be discussed in France, in Egypt, in Mesopotamia—wherever the men from their own town had gone.

That is exactly what happened, and I doubt if the Press has ever done any work so important. It took quite insignificant people and set them up for the world to look at them. The world in general did not take very much notice, but there were some who took all the notice that was necessary. There were the ten or twenty or fifty men who knew the individual concerned, and they read about him with a keen and vivid interest—the interest which is the foundation of memory. If they were serving together they discussed him; if none of their old companions were at hand they made remarks in their letters to the people at home. In my time I have heard many of those remarks and censored many of those letters, and I have found no reason to envy the men concerned the exemption which they gained. It will not be forgotten, and there is a day of reckoning to come.

That last sentence may seem to suggest that I believe that when our men return they will

immediately proceed to make life unhappy for the people who stayed at home, but the thing which is likely to happen is neither so simple nor so crude as that. Moreover, coming home is so beautiful, so happy an adventure that in itself it would be enough to make an end of vindictive feelings, if any such existed. No one is coming back from the war to start another war in England, and there is no need to anticipate a period of domestic strife to darken the early days of peace.

It is not so much that we are going to be set one against the other, as that the events of our time have compelled every one of us to take up a position on one side or the other of a most definite line. In these years of vast emergency we have either been for England or against her. No middle course was left. The need was too great, the demand for service too universal. There was no room for any one to say, "It is none of my business; I will go on attending to my own affairs." So much was required of all of us that every man and woman was compelled to choose, and having chosen to act. So far as the men of military age were concerned you might say that the broad line can be drawn between

those who went overseas and those who stayed at home, but a broad line is not a true line: some who went were unprofitable servants, some who remained behind gave all that any man can give. These things will be realised presently, and they will indeed declare themselves, for in the time to come all who truly served England will be bound together by every cord of sympathy and understanding and of common purpose, in a fashion which will be altogether beyond the comprehension of those who only served themselves.

In the time to come, when peace shall have returned, this division will begin to declare itself, and it will be the more clearly marked as the years pass over us. But now and at this time there are the signs of it and tokens, so that we can begin to see where it may lead us and what may be the result of these years of war. Not the least of those signs is the anger that rises in the heart of the soldier when he learns how others are evading service, and when he returns to this land for a little while and sees how they are conducting themselves at this time. And if I must write now of the anger of Englishmen against their country, I ask you to remember that it is the

anger of men who have proved that they love England, who, as I have tried to show, have seen the vision of her excellence. Moreover, this anger is not truly against England, but against certain things in England which went near to betraying us.

. . . . . .

The soldier comes from the immediate presence and peril of death beyond the sea. He comes, too, from a harsh and uneasy life. He has been divorced for a long time from all sorts of little things which make for the pleasantness of life, as well as from those secure joys which make it sacred. He has endured cold and hunger and utter weariness. He has known the pain of wounds or of shattering sickness. He has been held from his home and the companionship of all who are dearest to him on this earth; he has been subject to an irksome discipline and made acquainted with horrible things. He has been held in exile through the pitiless weeks and months, compelled to stand apart from the joys and sorrows of the chosen comrades of his life and to leave them to fend for themselves.

He returns, and for a time he is so happy that nothing else matters at all. But after

a while certain impressions are made. In the beginning, perhaps, he was not thinking much of those who stayed at home, neither judging nor envying them. Presently, however, it dawns on him that they are very prosperous, and that some of them are very discontented. The prosperity is the first thing that strikes him. It is quite impossible to miss the air of opulence which has come to some of our towns: there are so many expensive fur coats in England to-day, and every paper is full of costly advertisements of costly trifles. And the soldier whose family may have had to depend mainly on his separation allowance is apt to be impressed by the presence of a sixty-guinea piano in the house next door. There comes a feeling that it is hard that others should have so much and his own people so little.

But that does not matter so very much, nor would it make any great difference if it were not for the murmurs and grumblings and complaints which he hears. There are strikes and rumours of strikes. These opulent people are not satisfied. They are talking of hardship and injustice. If they cannot have more than the fabulous sums which they

are receiving already they will cease working, whatever the consequences may be, though guns and shells and ships may be delayed, though victory be postponed and the lives of men must fill the gap which their action has made in the defences of the nation. Can you imagine what it is to a man who has come from serving overseas to hear such talk as this ?

These others have toiled, but what of that ? He has his own memories of work that had to be done when the point of exhaustion had been reached and passed. And they have done nothing else. They have had no partings to endure. They have returned each day to the comfort of their homes. They have been permitted to eat and to sleep in peace ; they have received their rich reward week after week, and they have seen the happiness of their children. They have not known one hour of the bitterness of exile ; the peril of the trenches has not come near them. Work alone was demanded of them. Hunger and thirst and wounds and death and the stark miseries of the soul were far away and could not touch them. They were asked only to work and they would not work, and in the

heart of the man who has come from the front there is bitter anger.

You may say, if you like, that all this is special pleading, that I am overstating the case, that there is more to be said for the workers who have remained at home; but I am not pleading in any cause nor am I stating any case. I am merely trying to explain the thing as it appears to the ordinary soldier, to the man whom you may meet coming home on leave as you walk down your street to-day. I do not claim that he is altogether right; I am only telling you how the matter stands in his eyes, how the impression lives in his heart. And if you will consider the circumstances of his life through these years I do not think that you will be able to blame him.

There are ugly things and ugly people in England to-day. Go where you will you find the mark and trace of them. I am not now referring so much to the varieties of insanity which are grouped under the heading of conscientious objections as to the fat, complacent talk you may hear in the bar of any hotel or public-house, or in any other place where men go with money to burn. They speak of their own cleverness, of the doctors

they have deluded and of the tribunals they have hoodwinked. There is talk of profitable contracts, of the cheating of tax-collectors, and of store of smuggled food. There is display of wealth in every detestable form, with complaints against every kind of restriction. . . . I have sufficient knowledge of and faith in my countrymen to be aware that there are few civilians who do not share the soldiers' keen desire to break the necks of such creatures as these; yet they exist, they are not uncommon, they are very, very prosperous, and no one seems authorised to deal with them.

Listening to such talk—for these people, being utterly without shame, are willing at all times to continue their boasting in the presence of soldiers, and seem, indeed, to think that soldiers must necessarily admire them—the man from the front remembers the cases of which he read in the papers. He remembers that men whom he knew in other days are in the same damnable fellowship, and he realises that its members are scattered all over England. There comes in that hour a fierce and bitter anger and the awakening of various entirely primitive passions. And though the passion may pass the anger remains, and will

remain to shape the course of the coming years.

It may be that the soldier is very weary of his khaki and of all the burden of his life. He would, so he thinks, sell his soul to be in the position of these people. He can desire no better thing than that he might be allowed to remain in his home and to work among his own people. He is so weary of exile; he has had his fill of suffering and of wounds. Yet he knows that in a little while he must go back, that there is no end to his service while the war endures unless death finds him or he receives such injuries that he cannot be useful any more. He must return, leaving his home once more, leaving all these things which have become doubly and trebly dear in exile; there must be the pain of the parting once again and the renewal of the desolate hours. And while he goes these others will remain in safety and comfort with their high wages and the freedom of their homes. They will remain to grumble, to make complaints, to quarrel and in a hundred ways to delay the production of those things which are essential to victory.

I have said that the soldier thinks that he

would sell his soul to be in the position of those who have bought with a lie their freedom to stay at home. It is altogether typical of the best sort of our people that, brought to the point, he finds that this is just what he cannot do, what he cannot even attempt to do. For very many of our damaged men there might be a way of escape, but how many of them take advantage of it ? I have known so many who have come back shattered by wounds or poisoned by sickness. I have heard their complaints, and then I have seen them start on their journey back to the front. They might have lied and shammed their way out of the Army, but they would not do it. Knowing all that it meant they chose rather to return to the business which they took in hand at the beginning of the terrible years. I do not say that they were glad to go. No one who was not either singularly mad or singularly unfortunate could be glad to go, but they went.

Generalisations about human beings are rash adventures, but I do not think there can be any doubt that between these men who return again and again to the front and those others who will adopt every expedient

to escape from military service there exists a gulf which nothing can bridge. There is a fundamental difference which nothing, perhaps, but war could have revealed, but which since it has been revealed will never again be hidden. It is a difference which goes down to the very deepest places of the being and must inevitably affect the whole of the outlook on all things. The war has obliged these people to declare themselves, and, moreover, it has tied labels to them so that there shall be no mistake in the future. Those men who went with their lies and excuses before the tribunals are branded, and it will be quite useless for them to declare in the days of the coming peace that they also served England. We shall not forget, and we shall know how much of truth lives in their words, and we shall be able to disregard them.

It is not that there will be anything so petty as a boycott on the lines which some furious people have suggested, or anything in the way of reprisals. After the war we are not going to divide ourselves into two parties for the purpose of being unpleasant to each other. Even if the average Englishman had a memory sufficiently good to enable

him to carry out a business of that kind, he is not sufficiently vindictive, and no one is coming back from such a war as this to enter upon a campaign of spitefulness. It is certain, of course, that a number of old friendships will be at an end, for there are some men whom we shall avoid for the future, but there will be no question of setting to work to make them suffer for their actions. They will be left in possession of their profits, of their embellished homes and their undamaged bodies. But there is one thing which they will lose, and that is power.

All who have served England at this time have discovered England. I have tried to explain how we who went across the sea made that discovery, and to indicate some of the features of it. I am altogether confident that those who remaining here at home have also served, have made the same discovery. I have known very many of them, men and women alike, and I have heard something of what is in their hearts. They stand securely with the soldier in this, that at the hour of decision they did not choose to serve themselves, and there cannot be any doubt where they will stand in the

future when the time has come to build the world afresh.

For that time lies waiting for us in the days of peace. It is no question of slipping back to a sort of postponed autumn of 1914. The trumpet has sounded and we have been changed, and there is no return to the world which once we knew. It is written for us to go forward into a new world, to face a whole series of new problems and to deal with new conditions. Many things have fallen which will never rise again; many things have arisen which will have to be reconciled with the circumstance of peace. There lies before us a time of vast opportunity of peculiar peril and of unprecedented advantage.

It cannot be doubted where we shall find the men who insisted on staying at home when that time comes. They will be where they have always been, on the side of their own comfort and their own pockets, but there is the great handicap upon them. They will not be able to present themselves as true lovers of their country. They will be known for what they are. They have had to declare themselves in these years and they will not be able to escape. It does occasionally happen

that the catch phrase of a day carries within itself a vital principle, and a question which has been asked in jest wherever our tongue is spoken will have power to cancel all their claim to a hearing. It will only be necessary to ask, " What did you do in the great war ? "

The records will remain, in the files of all sorts of papers from the greatest to the least, and they will be living in the memories of very many. No evasion will have any value, no explanations will be profitable. It will be plain to all the world that at the time of their country's need they preferred to serve themselves, and that will be their sufficient condemnation. They will be branded for ever as enemies of England.

HAMMERSMITH
PUB LIBRARIES

2. OF DETESTABLE CITIES

THERE is a sense in which it is true that the war has touched every town and village in England. I do not suppose you could find even the tiniest hamlet without a tragic, personal interest in the progress of the conflict. Every little cluster of houses, every remote and sleepy little town, has its links with the front. There are the men who come and go; there are the names which everybody in the place recognises at once if they appear in the casualty lists. It happened a few weeks ago that for a couple of hours I had to wait in a room where there was nothing but the local paper to read, and I went through that paper very thoroughly. It was curious to note in every column—almost in every paragraph—that personal connection with the war of a large piece of England. Almost without exception the notes of village happenings were concerned with the doings of men in the Army, telling how one was at

home on leave, how another had just been wounded, how another had fallen in the fight. You cannot venture to say of any place that it is untouched; you dare not point to any strange house and say that it knows nothing of the meaning of war.

But while this is true, it is also true that there are some places where the soldier is made to feel that he is an alien, where he is immediately conscious of hostility which expresses itself in a score of unpleasant fashions. It is hard, if not impossible, to say how this comes about, but the fact cannot be denied. The orders of those mysterious authorities who control our movements send one to some place hitherto unknown. The station is reached, late in the day it may be, and in less than an hour one is fully aware of being unwelcome. All sorts of little things go to create and thereafter to deepen the impression. There is the surliness of porters at the station, the extortionate demand of the cab-driver, the glum unfriendliness of the landlord of the inn. Poor food is provided grudgingly, and there is a miserable room. The people about the place are resentful, and all their attitude suggests consciousness of suffering intrusion. In all the shops and

places of public service there is the same air of distrust, coupled with an obvious determination to make the soldier pay dearly for daring to venture into the district. And there are various remarks with which one becomes intolerably familiar. "They wanted to put a camp just outside the town, but we wouldn't have it." "I shall never forget the trouble we had when the soldiers were here"; "They ought to keep the soldiers in places that are used to them"—such are a few of the greetings which one learns to expect in the detestable cities.

Greed and grievances are the two marks by which you may know them. In every case the soldier, and particularly the officer, is regarded as a person from whom the largest possible sum of money must be obtained for the least possible service. Any protest against ridiculous overcharging is met by something closely related to insolence. "If you don't care to pay our price, you can go elsewhere"; "You can't expect to get things as cheap here as you do in the Army"; "We have taxes to pay, if you don't"—all these and many similar remarks have been made to me at one time or another since I returned to England,

and they are being made daily to men who have remained poor because they did not choose to serve themselves at this time.

And all this has nothing to do with the complacent treachery of the men of whom I was writing in the last chapter. The detestable cities are not those which are big and busy with work in consequence of the war. There are detestable people in those cities, but they have none of that dislike of the soldier. Indeed they are friendly, welcoming places, as though they wanted to explain just why so many of their young men are not in khaki and to prove their appreciation of the man who is. The places whose whole atmosphere is one of enmity are the sleek little towns which have been called upon for no special exertion, which are growing quietly wealthy without experiencing any special strain, and, standing apart from the war, are yet reaping a harvest from the war. The fact that some of their own men are soldiers has not enlightened them, and they appear to reserve their admiration for those who have obtained exemption and are becoming prosperous. No account of the suffering of other nations can move them, and they refuse to realise that they are only saved

from such desolation as Belgium has known by the hardships, pain and death of hundreds of thousands of Englishmen. There was a day when I came to one of these towns, and after experiencing its peculiar malice for some hours I sat down to try to understand the matter.

It was clear at last that this horrible attitude was not really a new thing; it was seen to be an old enemy transformed by war into something more abominable than before yet essentially the same. If you will look back to the days of peace I think you will quite easily remember that even then one came occasionally into communities of detestable people who were always greedy, always seeking their own advantage, and always grumbling. These little towns which fill one with anger to-day are not an invention of the war or even one of its indirect products. They existed long before; their spirit is one which has been with us for years, and I suppose the thing which makes it so hideously obvious to-day is the fact that the rest of the country has suffered a change which has passed them by. They remain as they were, little islands untouched by the tide which has swept across

the rest of the nation. I began to think that perhaps these little towns may stand for an England of yesterday, that their spirit is a spirit which was once common in England. There came all sorts of dusty memories, memories of theories which once were held to be reliable guides in the business of life, theories which shaped the policy of England, to which lip service is still paid in our laws.

All these people who seek their own advantage so greedily are not altogether to be blamed. If you will consider the matter you will, perhaps, remember that there was a time when a whole school of politicians and economists preached a doctrine which was in essence a declaration that it was the chief duty of the citizen to seek his own advantage, to seek increase of his material possessions. On that theory, in fact, very much of our public life is framed. You can find traces of it all over the Statute Book, and the worship of material prosperity is made compulsory by very many of our laws. They say in effect that a man shall prosper or he shall not survive. If he is not prosperous he is forbidden to be happy and almost forbidden to be healthy.

Certainly he is shut out from the best things in life, and if he falls below a certain level of prosperity he is punished.

I do not know if any one will feel inclined to deny these statements, and I am confident that no one who has considered carefully the facts of our social system will have any temptation to do so. For consider the position in the days before the war made it necessary for us to use all our men as fully as possible. In that time it appeared that there is not work enough to go round, and so we had competition in the labour market as in all other markets. There were those who could find no work to do, and there were those who could only find a little work or work that was very badly paid. All these suffered, from childhood to the end of life. They did not get enough of the right kind of food; their clothes were not proof against the violence of our climate; their dwellings were comfortless and unhealthy, and their bodies were tormented by alternating periods of furious toil and disastrous idleness. If they sank a little lower in the scale there was only the workhouse before them,—the workhouse where they were compelled to perform hard and unpleasant tasks, nominally

in return for the food and shelter which they received, but practically as a punishment for their failure. Our system sought consistently and successfully to make poverty unpleasant and shameful, and we have a law by which it is a crime for a man to be without visible means of support.

The inevitable result of all this was to make of the poor, defeated man a terrible example to all the rest of us. He was there with his hunger and his wretched clothes and his horrible habitation to remind us of what would be our fate if we did not behave ourselves. It was not set before us as a penalty for refusing to work, but merely for failing to work successfully. A man might have all sorts of fine and valuable powers, and he might be able to make useful and beautiful things, but if he lacked the ability to sell his work at profitable rates he was punished, and the rest of us were invited, if not in so many words, then by every implication and circumstance of his treatment, to take warning.

Bearing these things in mind it seemed to me on that evening, and it still seems, that there is an explanation of the detestable cities and almost an excuse for them. Nothing could

make them less horrible or less miserably unworthy of all that England has been and done in these years of war, but it is possible to understand how they came by their spirit.

All these people, with their grasping hands and their endless complaints, are nothing but the product of the theories which poisoned our social life for so many years. They were bred to the idea that it was their business to get as much as possible for as little as possible. They were told that this was the rule of life and that others would treat them in the same way. To be hard, to drive bargains, to obtain high payment for scanty service and high prices for inferior goods—all these were the way to success, the way to avoid the shame of the workhouse. Everything by which they were surrounded tended to deepen and confirm that impression, for the detestable cities are without exception small, remote places having little contact with the outer world.

In such communities the habit of the more powerful people becomes very rapidly the habit of all. If they set an example of harsh dealing, that example spreads—it is merely a matter of self-defence. Moreover, there is

no experience of the changing and more enlightened ways of mankind to correct the ugly and mistaken ideas. The people have no chance to realise that the world has discovered that honest dealing, generous service and fair terms are actually more profitable than the methods to which they are accustomed. And they have never heard that it is beginning to be understood that to be prosperous is not after all the first duty of the citizen, or that, so long as he is a good citizen, the State owes him those things which are necessary to life and well-being. Presently they will understand, but the time is not yet.

So they remain to remind us of what England was at one time in peril of becoming, and I do not think the lesson of them will be lost. It is at least certain that it will not be lost on any soldier who has anything to do with them. It happened that for some time I was stationed at a camp close to one of the worst of them which I have discovered. To that camp there came month by month men who had been wounded overseas and were now recovering strength so that they might return to the conflict and the peril, and I know what those men thought of the place and what they will

always think of it. "And we went out to fight for a crowd like that!" I have heard it said many times, and it made me ashamed of England in the days before I understood the matter. And even understanding could not altogether make an end of anger. I have no delusions about the soldier, and I should be the last to claim that every man in khaki is a hero, but I do happen to know something of what has been done and endured by our men who have served beyond the sea. I know how hard their life has been and how hard it must be again when they return, and it is a damnable thing if in their brief months at home they are given black looks and grudging service and robbed of the few shillings of their pay by people who have reaped nothing but profit and advantage from the war. It is impossible to avoid hating places where such things are done and the spirit which has led to the doing of them.

The ugly deeds will be remembered, and the memory of them will have its own influence on the life of the future. Here is one of those things which we who have learned to love England shall refuse to tolerate. As we shall be at enmity with the deeds, so shall we

be with the spirit which makes them possible, and with the laws in which that spirit is made public. The revision of the Statute Book is one of the more certain of the consequences of the war ; a great deal of it was old-fashioned in 1914, but to-day it is obsolete, and presently when we have time we shall discover how much we have learned, and we shall return to the ways of freedom from which we had wandered so far.

And at last, as I have said, understanding will come to the people of the detestable cities themselves. They will realise in the end that it is not necessary to be afraid, and that is really all that is required. They would not be so unpleasant if it were not that their lives have been directed by fear. Once make it plain to them that they have nothing to fear and they will become human again in time, and learn perhaps to be kindly and gracious and to put away suspicion out of their hearts, so that the war will have done something for them as well as for us. For it must be a wretched business to be angry all the time, to look on every newcomer as a possible rogue, and at the best to be calculating in your mind how much you can make out of him. These

people may have their compensations, but I am not able to imagine what they can be or what shape their happiness takes, or if, indeed, they have any knowledge of happiness.

3. OF WOUNDING AND FORGIVENESS

WHEN I was planning this book I thought that I would write a chapter on hating England, and the other day I went so far as to begin it. But that chapter will not be finished. There are things to be hated in England, and I have written already of some of them, but it is not possible to hate England or to remain for any long time in anger. There come the memories of those other days when one's dreams went searching across the miles of land and sea in an agony of longing. And if hurtful things have been found since the time of return there has also been found so much that is kind and gracious, and a great splendour. Outside my tent on this evening of May there is our beautiful England, and I do not see how any one could look at all these trees and green meadows without finding healing for any pain that may have been inflicted. There is a blackbird who has come

to cry alleluia through the loveliness of the twilight, and there are friends of mine held in bondage on every front of this our war, and I know what will be in their hearts at this time, and how they will be praising England in all their imagination. How then can I be hating England, even for an hour ?

This is the enduring virtue of our land. She does ugly things, and some of her people are very ugly people, but always she has power to comfort, and the dream and desire of her must remain. You cannot escape from this business of loving England—though you may have to cross the sea before you realise that that love is in your heart—nor in the end does her consolation ever fail. She may wound, but she has the magic for healing, nor may any of her children turn easily to any other allegiance.

In my time, and particularly during this fourth year of war, I have heard many soldiers declare that they will not stay in England after peace has returned ; and it has been easy to understand their hurt and angry words. It would be absurd to deny or to attempt to hide the fact that there has been very much in England to wound those who at this

time are giving her the greatest service of which men are capable. Men coming back from the front to stay for a little while in their homes are hurt over and over again, and I suppose they will continue to be hurt. In those hours of irritation and of pain they say some things which it is possible they do not mean, and form resolutions which they are not likely to carry out, but even the most deeply injured of them have their hours of rejoicing and at the last of forgiveness.

England has hurt her soldiers, and most of the people who have stayed at home seem so entirely unconscious of the fact. I did not set out to write a book about the grievances of the Army, and making complaints is a detestable business, but I cannot explain how we have found England without confessing and trying to explain how we have found pain in England, for it is all a part of the whole. And that is why I will ask those who do not see what injuries the soldier can have received to try for a few minutes to look at things from the soldier's point of view.

It appears, then, to the soldier that the country, taking it as a whole, does not realise that after all he has the chief and the worst

of the jobs in this war. From that failure to grasp the relationship of the various tasks which have to be performed there follow all sorts of things, some of them important, some of them trifling, whose cumulative effect makes for pain, disgust and dreariness in his heart.

It is admitted, of course, that all the tasks have to be performed. Without munitions the soldier would be powerless, and for his ability to strike at the enemy he depends on the labour of those who are at work on countless trades at home. He depends, too, on a supply of funds sufficient to purchase for him the tools of his particular trade, and the more of those tools he has the easier does his task become. He is dependent—and admits his dependence—on those who furnish the money as well as on those who manufacture the guns, shells and gas which he requires. And he is also dependent on all who keep the machinery of life and of government going during his absence.

No soldier would dream of denying the importance of the work of those who have a share, however indirect, in the business of war. He knows quite well how many and

how different are the things which have to be done. His own immediate necessities call for the assistance of hosts of remote and hidden toilers. In mines, in fields and in forests, men and women must work that he may be armed and fed. For him the rubber must be gathered and brought across all the leagues of ocean. In factories and laboratories, by the white glare of the furnaces and in the thundering forge, the toil must be incessant. Ships must go to and fro upon the sea to fetch and carry for him; ploughs must move up and down the fields, and all manner of great striving engines must be tended and served that his material requirements may be supplied. And in addition to making for him those things which he actually handles, the workers at home have many more things to do in order that his labour may not be in vain, so that it is easier to say what is not than what is essential war work. The soldier is, if you like, the head of the spear whose shaft is the great body of the nation at home. Without the head the shaft would be meaningless, and without the shaft the head would be powerless.

From the one point of view, then, all we who are doing the work of the war are equal,

since we are all necessary. But it appears to the soldier that here, broadly speaking, the equality ends and an inequality begins which has many degrees from the infinitesimal to the tremendous. There are the inequalities of sacrifice, and there are the inequalities of reward. The soldier would be rather more than human if he did not realise that his is the greater sacrifice, and rather less than human if he did not grasp the fact that his is the lesser reward. And I do not think that he would mind even this if he did not find a very general assumption on the part of the people at home of an all-round equality, if he did not find them regarding him with some envy on the one hand and considering on the the other that he is adequately rewarded for what he does.

It would be easy to write passionately about all this, for it is a matter upon which no soldier can help feeling strongly, but I am not trying to do anything more than to explain a point of view. For the sake of the future we have to understand one another better, and passion is apt to get in the way of understanding and to set a mere uncomprehending sympathy in the place of clear knowledge—

the only sure foundation upon which either individuals or nations can build.

I have said that the soldier realises that his is the greater sacrifice, and in saying this I include with the soldier, of course, those who love him, whose lives are bound together with his life, to whom he is more dear than any of the sons of men. Indeed the women who have not withheld their men from this service are the greatest sufferers of all as they are so often the bravest, and I do not think there is any man who crosses the sea who does not understand that he leaves behind some whose part is far harder than his own. With these sacred and intimate things I am not for the moment concerned, although it is most true that those partings and that knowledge of the pain of others left behind are a part of the soldier's service which might by itself commend his case to all who have escaped that suffering.

Leaving these matters aside, consider the more material things, the circumstances and conditions of life of the man who goes and of the man who stays behind. There is that matter of the sacrifice of freedom which is so considerable a thing in this Army which we

have improvised in the hour of need. There are, of course, many irritating restrictions for those who remain, but regarded from the far side of the door of the recruiting office they do not affect in principle those liberties which for the time we have lost, and of whose loss we are so bitterly and constantly aware. On the ordinary hardships and discomforts of the life there is no need to dwell; the human body is very quick to learn and soon becomes accustomed to new conditions, learns endurance and discovers how to do without much that had seemed essential. At the same time it may be well to hint that from no point of view can the life be regarded as one long glorious picnic, and the most hardworking maker of munitions would scarcely find it a rest.

But it is when he steps into the front line trenches that the soldier leaves behind all who share with him the great task of our times. From that moment there is no fate to compare with his, either in the terror of its possibilities or in the hardship of its perpetual conditions. It is his particular and special place in the scheme of things as we know it to-day, and it is as the poles apart from the hardest, the

most perilous and the most distasteful of the lives which are lived by those who remain behind.

That it is perilous is known and admitted; the hardship and the loathsomeness of it are not so generally recognised. For the sake of those who care for him the soldier is not inclined to make much of the more detestable features of his existence, and war is commonly disinfected and deodorised before it is brought home for general inspection. The newspaper correspondents and the photographers show the lines of clean, cheery, singing men going up to the front line, and trainloads of some of the same men wounded, but washed, wearing clean bandages and still cheery, coming back. Concerning the interval between the going up and the returning they are reticent.

That reticence is to be commended and imitated. Nothing would be more easy than to make a horrible picture of what life in the front line can be in certain circumstances, and it is hard to imagine anything more unforgivable. All that I wish to do here is to point out that when he is doing the work which is his peculiar task the soldier is in position apart from all others, in peril of

every kind, having horrible tasks to perform, living under conditions which are not to be described. And you must remember that, not so very long ago, he was a civilian, and the mere description of the things which he is now called upon to endure would have turned him sick. There is no magic in a uniform and a few months of training to change all the nature of a man, or to make it easy for him to face loathsome conditions. He may become accustomed to them in time, but they can never cease to be abominable, never cease to cause suffering of mind and body.

But all this is his business. He set out to do these things, to live this life and to face these perils, and he carries on with his job. It is not the job that he would have chosen, perhaps, if he had known all about it at the beginning, but there it is, and it only remains to make the best of it. This he proceeds to do, developing in time astonishing powers of resistance and a cheery fatalism which carry him through months and even years of it. But you must not suppose that he ever finds it really pleasant, or that he looks forward to his turn to go up the line with happiness, or that he can avoid feeling rather envious now

and then when he thinks of the men who are left behind in the pleasantness and comfort of their homes. And it is not wonderful that he should realise that so far as this war is concerned, the nastiest part of it is his share.

He is wounded or he is given leave and he returns to England, and England, quite unintentionally but not the less effectively, sets to work to hurt him in all sorts of subtle ways, and in some ways which are not subtle at all. At the front the question of money did not trouble him very much, but when he comes home and discovers how prices have risen he realises that his back-pay is not quite so pleasantly impressive as it had looked, and that it will not buy nearly all of the desirable things of which he had dreamed. On the other hand, he finds everywhere but in his own home and the homes of other soldiers an oppressive opulence. Although prices were never so high, there never seemed to be so many people in the shops. Every one seems to have money to spend, and his neighbours are very prosperous. Very often he finds that his own trade is flourishing as it had not done for years, and that wages have risen incredibly. And in his own home he discovers a greater poverty than

he had imagined, a harder struggle than anything of which he had dreamed.

Perhaps you can grasp something of the bitterness of that hour. He sees quite clearly that if only he were not in the Army he would be able to make as much money as any of the rest of these flourishing people. He chose the harder part, and there is given to him the lesser reward. It is not only that he is poorer by far than he would have been if the old rates and the old values had remained,—he realised at the beginning that that would happen, and he faced the consequences of it; but so many of those whom he knew have increased their incomes out of all proportion to their expenditure, and they are saving money fast.

There is a poster with which every one must be familiar, for it has been put up all over the country. The work, one imagines, of an intensely civilian artist, it was designed to persuade civilians to put their money into the War Loan; but it is the most bitter comment on the relative positions of the soldier and the civilian that could have been devised. There is a soldier in full trench kit, plainly on his way back to the front, and there is a civilian

of worthy and prosperous appearance. The civilian is on the steps of a post-office where, according to a notice in the window, war bonds are on sale. He has stopped to shake hands with the soldier, and as he does so he says, "Good-bye, my boy, and good luck. *I'm going to do my bit in here.*"

There you have it in all the beauty of its vast simplicity. The soldier is going back to the chance of wounds and agonising death, back to the certainty of life in a stinking trench under the incessant thunder of the guns, where every change of wind must be watched lest the death-gas come stealthily across to tear at throat and lungs and eyes. He calls that "doing his bit"; he has done a great deal of it already, and now he is going to do some more. The civilian, on the other hand, is going to put some of the money he is earning so freely into the safest investment in the world; he will receive interest at a good rate, and presently, when the pound note will be worth considerably more than it is to-day, he will get all his money back—and that is his idea of "doing his bit." And in England to-day you shall find fat-souled, prosperous men who consider that in buying War Bonds

they have done all that is required of them, and who profess to envy the soldier his jolly life, his freedom from the burden of the taxes, and his happy ignorance of the restrictions which are set about their lives, who will even go beyond this and add the insult of remarking that the soldier ought to be grateful to them for paying the taxes by means of which he is kept.

So does England hurt and wound those sons of hers who have offered and are continually offering the suffering of their hearts, of their minds, of their bodies, and even life itself in her defence. It is true that she gives words of great thanks and praise, and medals and bits of ribbon, but these are not the things which we were taught to desire in the years when it was the rule that the man who was not prosperous must perish, nor are these the things which in years to come will feed and clothe our damaged bodies or make good to us the years which we have lost in her service. You must not blame us overmuch if in place of the public praise we would prefer to take our reward in cash down and the joys of home like the civilian in the picture, and I do not think it should be found altogether surprising if we have our times of anger.

Whether there is anger or not, there are certainly and inevitably the hours of pain, when for a little while there is no comfort in the loveliness of England nor anything profitable in her glory. There are few, I imagine, who can escape these hours, and with some the bitterness is very keen, the misery very intense. Yet at the last there comes healing.

It comes in many ways, but I think perhaps the root of it is all one. There comes the realisation that England is after all something better and greater than these prosperous, protesting tax-payers, that they are just an excrescence, an accidental, evil product of an infinitely complex time; more and more it is apparent that the face of England is set against them, and the increases of Army pay which were made last year were a token of a greater official understanding of the position of the soldier. They were little more than a token, but as such they were greatly valued, and they had a power far beyond their actual amount to comfort and hearten the men who received them. But healing comes in other, less material ways also.

It comes, as it came in the case of the detestable cities, from recognition of the fact that

there lives in England to-day a more excellent spirit, that these hurtful things are not the true expression of the soul of the country as it is at this time, but of bad past years. Through all this period of our strife there has been growing in England a new way of living—or should it be said that we have been groping back to forgotten ideals, rediscovering ancient freedoms? Put it which way you will, the result is the same, and it has the same happy splendour. Words are spoken and things are done which prove over and over again that the past, with its false values, is dead, and that the way is open for us to go forward to something better than we have known. And there is on every hand so much of kindness, so much sympathy and real comradeship with the soldier, that he knows that when the years of reconstruction come he will most certainly have with him all those who are serving most faithfully now, and they are the best people of our time.

So at last he sees that England remains, and that the heart of her is set upon righteousness in spite of every appearance of evil, and that his own trouble is an accidental and not an intended thing. There is no need to be angry

after all, or even to be hurt, and there is in his heart forgiveness for all that he has suffered at her hands, with rejoicing at the end that he has been permitted a share in the work of this time. He looks back, it may be, at the pages of history and sees them as he saw them at the beginning of his service, and sees in them the reflection of the true England of to-day, the England whose need has called the idle from their idleness, given power to the weak and courage to the faint-hearted and brought them into one service, a service whose memory shall endure for ever.

He sees that it is neither the quality of the service nor the nature of the reward which matters, and he learns at last—most difficult of feats for the soldier to accomplish—to think with patience if not with kindliness of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers. All these noisy people, with their grievances and their murderous strikes, are not so far away after all. It is simply that they do not understand what service means. Up to the limits of their understanding they have served, and they will continue to serve. If they understood better they would serve better—that is all. And as to the matter of reward, these things will

be regarded very differently in the coming years, and he is content to wait.

It is enough for him that he is free once more to look at England with rejoicing eyes, and eyes that are wiser than when he dreamed in the days of exile.

HAMMERSMITH
PUBLIC LIBRARIES

CHAPTER III

THESE THINGS ENDURE

HAMMERSMITH
PUBLIC LIBRARIES

1. OF RIDING IN TRAINS

THE Army has some distressing habits and one or two that are really pleasing. If there is one thing for which I am sincerely grateful it is that during my service I have been sent off on all sorts of sudden journeys to all parts of England. Sometimes it is a matter of taking drafts from one station to another, sometimes of doing temporary duty in some distant place, and sometimes when one has been compelled to retire to hospital for a while there is a visit to some remote convalescent camp. All this means moving about in trains, and that means, or ought to mean, looking at England.

In the case of the soldier returned from service overseas this is generally what it does mean. At the beginning of his journey he may pay the usual visit to the bookstall and lay in an assortment of papers, but I have noticed that they do not often hold his attention for very long, and presently they are put

aside altogether while he sits looking out of the window, watching England go by, comforting his soul with the sight of her, and learning something more of her variety and unity.

In the years before the war, travelling was not one of our habits. There were those, of course, whose business took them about the country, and most of us went for a holiday at least once in the year, and there were such annual rushes across country as the visit of the men from the North to London for the Cup Tie at the Crystal Palace or the pilgrimage to Epsom for the Derby. But as a nation we had not learned the trick of moving about in our own country, and it is certain that we had not learned how to travel profitably. A train journey was either so great an adventure as to be packed with all sorts of fears from beginning to end, or a tiresome necessity which had to be endured and must be made as pleasant as possible. There were very few of us who regarded it as a chance to look at England.

And when our occupation took us to any strange place, we were usually content to get our business finished as soon as possible and

then to return. It did not occur to us that all towns are worth looking at, that it is a good thing to walk about them, to watch their ways and to learn something of the lives of their people. We had our own affairs and they were quite enough for us, and we were not interested in anything else. We spent our days in magnificent ignorance of the ways and thoughts and conditions of life of people fifty miles away. The Londoner knew of Lancashire as a district given to strikes, whence multitudes of short, square men, speaking a strange language, descended upon his city on one day in the year; the people of Kent understood in a general way that there were areas where hops were not grown, and Leeds had perhaps heard of Bristol because the name of the town is on so many of the packets of cigarettes. Such knowledge as we had of the country outside of the district of our own interest was of that superficial kind which comes from a hasty reading of the papers, slightly enlarged in some cases by means of picture postcards.

The war came and mixed us all up in the most astonishing fashion. Our regiments keep their old territorial names, but with the names

their connection with the county ends, for all practical purposes. In the early days, battalions did exist as units and were frequently composed of men from the same districts, but it was not found possible to maintain that system. As casualties occurred and had to be made good, drafts were put in from any convenient source, and we have learnt more about each other in consequence during the last four years than during the previous four hundred. Men from all parts of the country have fought side by side in the same battalions, and the storm of German shell has blasted away the old barriers which used to part the north from the south and the east from the west.

There has been more than this setting side by side of men from remote places. Hospitals have been established all over the country, and wounded men returning have been sent to them with entire disregard of the locality to which they belong. Indeed it seems to have been the desire of the authorities to send them as far as possible from their own places, so that you may find men from Sussex in Manchester, and men from Cornwall in Harrogate. The convalescent camps, too, are set up

far from the districts to which belong the regiments they serve. Whether they like it or not, our men have been compelled to become acquainted with places which had been nothing but names to them before the war. They have been sent to hobble about strange towns, to gain experience of a new countryside. And it has often happened that in those places they have found themselves wives, so that in the years to come they will continually return and their children will be in a wider possession of England. And all this journeying after long absence has taught them to look at England and to make their own the places to which they come.

In addition to moving us about, the war has given us the habit of studying maps and the power of looking at them intelligently. In those other years very few of us took much notice of maps. There were, of course, a few who used them for motoring or cycling, but even they understood little of the real use and value of the printed sheets which showed them the way from one town to another. Contours and conventional signs were meaningless to them. Not one in thousands could tell by a glance at the map whether

a particular bit of road ran uphill or down, or whether a section of railway was in a cutting or on an embankment, or whether a church had a spire or a tower.

These things the war has taught us. There are hundreds of thousands of men to-day to whom a map is as easily intelligible as a page of a newspaper. Every officer is thoroughly trained in map-reading; the majority of non-commissioned officers are taught a great deal about it, and they pass it on to the men. The power to understand maps is chiefly required, of course, at the front, but the habit of studying and of relying upon them is one that clings, as shopkeepers in the neighbourhood of our camps have discovered. Before the war they were hardly aware of the existence of the Ordnance Survey maps, but now they are selling them every week as men move into the camps and seek at once for maps to tell them something about their new surroundings, something about this hitherto unknown part of England.

And all this quickens the understanding, so that the country seen from the hurrying train is appreciated as it never was in the old days. Tunnels are something more to-day

than irritating patches of thundering gloom. The gradient signs by the side of the railway are noted; there is an eye to the way of the streams and rivers and to the general run of the ground. The wheeling landscape is no longer a pretty but meaningless picture. Its character is noted and to a considerable extent remembered.

So there has come to a vast number of our men comprehension of the infinitely varied ways of life which there are to be found within our borders. They have seen and known. The people of the hills have seen the broad levels of the fens; the men from the tiny villages have been taken to the great towns; the folk of the green countryside have been whirled across the miles where the pitheads are on every side, and those who had dwelt by the slag heaps and the blast furnaces have gone down to the sea through Kent in summer. I cannot believe that there is a man in the Army to-day who has not come to a fuller, clearer knowledge of England than he possessed before he put on his khaki, who has not had England made more real to him. And very, very many have learnt a new sympathy with whole classes of

those of whom they had only read in the papers in the former days, and that is going to help us in the time to come.

But to ride about England in trains is to learn something more than, say, the difference between Lancashire and Norfolk. Indeed, there are many lessons which it drives home to the dullest brain, and one of them is the variety and the abundance of power that there is in this little land, and how in the past we have cultivated one kind of power and neglected another. Those black industrial districts are very ugly, but they are so plainly efficient. The tall factories are crowding one upon the other; there are the miles of the busy sidings, the hurrying men, and the little engines scuttling to and fro. Scarcely a yard of ground is wasted, and the buildings are piling into the sky. The very playgrounds have an air of reckless industry. . . . The train races onward, and all these things are left behind so that you come again to the open land and the spaces of infinite leisure.

War is giving England back to the keeping of the plough. Germany let loose the submarines to lay waste the ways of the ocean, and by that act set free the excellent acres of our

land from idleness; and there are few sights more comforting to the eyes than that of the return of our fields to their proper business and occupation. Month by month the unprofitable pasture is being reclaimed, and going about the country in the past year one has seen the tide of the brown sweeping up over the green, and the coming of the corn in place of scanty grass; we see in these days the beginning of the redemption of England.

But it is only the beginning. There still remains to our farm lands that air of something like wastefulness. We are very far as yet from making the most of them; there is much idle land in England still. . . . The train goes on past great tracts that might seem worthless if it were not that little cultivated patches here and there bear witness to the power that is waiting to be used. And at the end of the journey one is not so troubled for the future, for it is quite plain that there remains virtue in the English soil, that our resources within our own borders are greater than we had imagined. The ships may rest for ever on the bottom of the sea, but the corn is growing in our fields, and I do not think that we shall ever be content to allow them

to return to idleness. For as the growing of corn is the proper occupation of fertile land, so is the tending of that land a very excellent trade for men.

The train roars through another of the black districts and out once more into the pleasant places. For a little while there is the vision of the tall buildings, of the great chimneys reaching up to the sky, of the shabby, crowded little houses with their tiny gardens and with their unconquerable children playing as industriously in the shadow of that gloom as they might in the loveliest valleys. There are no green fields, no birds except a few dingy sparrows, no animals except an occasional careworn cat. The soil, the buildings, the people and the very sky itself are grimy and stained with the by-products of toil; it is a land where the freshness of spring must pass in a day, where all the gold of summer is tarnished tinsel, where flowers are doomed before the buds are fully open. Presently all this is left behind, and there are trees and fields rejoicing under the free sunlight, and clean, for they have been washed by the unpolluted rain.

It is seen that there remain quite close to

some of our busiest, ugliest places some of the fairest of all the hills and valleys and plains of England. Go where you will in Lancashire, Yorkshire, Durham and Northumberland—it is always true. A tram will take you out of the heart of Manchester and put you down at the beginning of the quiet loveliness of Cheshire in Altrincham ; ten minutes' run from Sheffield will give you the freedom of the valley which leads to Edale and the Peak ; you may come in a few miles from Leeds to the wide splendour of the moors ; northwards from the Tyne are places to which the heart returns.

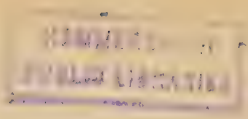
In other days one was content to take things as they were, and only the few were concerned to change them. It did not occur to most of us that change might be worth while, nor did it seem to be very possible. In youth we dreamed, perhaps, of a fairer world and a pleasanter way of life, but the dream passed with the years, so that we came to the time of acquiescence. When the dreamers spoke we shook our heads and declared that what had been must be, that the world must go on its accustomed course. But in this new time, with all its terror and splendour and incredible experiences, we are not so sure that the fact

of the existence of anything is sufficient reason for it to continue to exist. Men who have seen towns shelled to pieces lose faith in the immutability of their own cities, and men who have lived—as all we khaki people have at one time or another—in camps in the most beautiful parts of England are apt to prefer to live in the beautiful places hereafter. There is the beginning of a doubt and a questioning. Since the splendid places are so near the places which have been made ugly by work, why should not one live in the splendid places and leave the others for work alone ?

Our England is here, waiting to be used. She is ready to give us homes under her ancient trees, to give the children joy of the marching seasons, with fine playgrounds and clear streams and little animals to be their friends. She offers to our women habitations in loveliness, and to our men a space of rest in the calm of happy evening. She is ready to be to us as she was to our fathers, a home instead of a place in which to live ; she is ready to receive and comfort and refresh us at the end of the day.

There are those to-day who cannot see why

their women and their children should continue to live in the ugly places when so many beautiful places are waiting for them, and if you tell them that transport is the difficulty, they will answer that it is up to the inventors to turn out a new sort of transport that will do the job properly. The production of some improved form of tram or train or motor coach does not seem such a very great business. Our railways as a whole are running their trains no faster now than they were forty years ago, and it is time that they woke up or were replaced by some more efficient service. For the English have been looking at England.



2. OUR GOODLY HERITAGE

RETURNING from the war one sees England as she was never seen before; but there is something more in the business than a mere opening of the eyes. There is a change in the point of view as well, so that one regards her in an entirely different fashion.

In the old days very many of the English were made to feel that they had no business to be in England. That is no fanciful phrase, but an exact statement of a fact. There were fat and prosperous people, owners very often of pieces of England, who continually told young men "England is no place for you; you ought to be in the Colonies." They explained—though indeed the thing was clear beyond all need of explanation—that there were no prospects in England for one who was not exceptional in some way or other, and they insisted that even for the exceptional people there were far better chances overseas. Those were the days when we were continually

invited to consider the case of Cecil Rhodes, who went to South Africa to seek health and found it together with certain millions of pounds. In a hundred ways the lesson was preached to us. The favourite hero of stage and novel alike was the bronzed, stalwart man who had gone away from England in the steerage and returned with great possessions. The papers were continually printing articles on the advantages to be found in the other lands; there were all sorts of schemes of aid for emigrants, and there was persistent advertising of the splendid opportunities waiting in Canada, Australia and Africa, with correspondingly gloomy appreciations of the future at home. There was, indeed, a whole elaborate apparatus designed for the purpose of pushing Englishmen out of England.

It is not for me to ask whether that policy was wise or foolish. The only point with which I am concerned at present is the effect of it on the minds of those whom it attempted to influence. We at whom all this propaganda of threat and promise was aimed had, of course, our different views of it, and some of us were so pleased by the promises that they failed altogether to notice the threats. But there

were others who saw only the threats. It happened that we wanted to stay in England. We had our desire and longing for adventure, but we had, too, the conviction that only in England could we be at home, and we had our dreams. To us the insistent advice to go abroad was an ugly, injurious thing. Even in those days we were aware of some of the beauty and excellence of our land, and we had no wish to dwell in any other. But it was made plain that our country did not want us.

Nowhere in England was there any little house or small piece of land which we might call or hope to call our own. We might be able and very willing to work, but England could only reply that she had already so many servants that there was not enough work for all of them. There was no promise that faithful service should be faithfully rewarded, but there was the continual menace of unemployment with all its consequences. If we found work we could not be sure of retaining it, or of being paid an adequate wage. If we lacked what is called the business instinct —which is the ability to buy cheaply and to sell at considerable profit—we had no hope

of such wealth as should make secure our position in England. We were compelled to watch the passing of England into the hands of the people who possessed that instinct. We saw all sorts of traders gathering great fortunes and buying estates and taking to themselves the lordship of villages and of great areas of the land which did not want us any more. The loveliest places passed into the possession of German-Jew financiers, of pork butchers and makers of pills, of drapers and grocers and contractors who when they were established joined the chorus of those who advised us to get out of England. Houses which had been the homes of our fathers became week-end cottages for the wealthy, and were placed beyond our reach. We were driven from the countryside to the towns, to dwellings in ugly streets, to work endlessly and unprofitably with the fear of unemployment upon us. It did not matter what powers we possessed if we lacked the power of making money, of selling profitably our labour and the labour of others. If we could bargain cleverly we were entitled to the earth and the fulness thereof. If we could not, we might remain in bondage if we were so foolish as to prefer

to do so, but it was made plain that we should do better to go elsewhere.

In those days we were exiles in England. Sometimes we went out to look at the country and to walk about its pleasant places, and everywhere notices stood forbidding us to wander from the appointed thoroughfares. The hills and the little valleys and the woods were forbidden to us, and there were men paid to scare us away from them. We stood watching from a long way off the excellent loveliness which we were forbidden to approach. There is in Cheshire a certain village to which on holidays many people from Manchester and Stockport would walk or ride on bicycles, and the people of the village were accustomed to provide tea, a generous meal at an honest price. But there succeeded to the property a man who disliked the coming of these common people to his pretty village, so he told the cottagers that if they served any more meals they would be turned out of their homes. They could not help themselves. They were obliged to obey, and in consequence the lives of thousands were robbed of an occasional brief happiness.

That which was done in the case of that

village was done in one fashion or another all over the country. Gamekeepers were given charge of the moors and the forests, with all the machinery of the law behind them to aid in keeping us away from England. Commons were enclosed and old footpaths barred, and the banks of the rivers were put out of bounds. There remained only the roads, the paths shown on the maps, and certain tiny areas scattered over the country where we might move freely. For the rest we were commanded to stand aside that the rich might more comfortably and easily kill pheasant and partridge and grouse; and if on rare occasions they admitted us to their parks we were expected to be very humbly grateful, and to observe punctiliously all sorts of restrictions. We could only obtain the right to move at will in England by making a great deal of money, and that was a trade in which we were not skilled. Year by year our liberties were restricted, and the bitterness deepened in our hearts till in time we were ready to confess that we had no part or share in our country.

There came the time of great necessity to make an end of all false, artificial things. The need for mighty armies arose and the need for

ground on which to train them. The old training areas were seen to be utterly insufficient, and the map was dotted with new camps, and very many of the landowners were furiously angry. Soldiers were coming to tramp about their parks, to scare their pheasants, to spoil their golf-courses—it was intolerable! They protested in every public and private way that was known to them, and harried all their influential friends with complaints and requests even while our old Army was dying on the Marne. But necessity is the master of us all. The camps were established and the lines of men went skirmishing over the land, across the moors, through coppice, wood and forest, in all sorts of forbidden places.

There was something thoroughly enjoyable in that business. If one had been looking longingly at England for years it was very good to have come to that freedom, to be able to disregard all those fuming rich men and their sullen gamekeepers and their insolent notice-boards. There came in those days of training the beginning of the new way of regarding the country. It appeared that after all we common people who were poor had certain rights, and that the wealthy were not so

securely established as they had seemed to be, since there were conditions under which they could not refuse to allow us to go about their land or prosecute us for disturbing their great lumbering pheasants. In addition to moving to and fro we had to dig trenches very often, and to take liberties with hedges and fences—things hitherto inviolable. By the time that the period of training was over many of us had learned to go about the country more freely and happily than ever before.

We went across the sea to find the things appointed for us and returned with all our ideas subtly and curiously changed, having new standards, comprehending values of which we had been ignorant. We cannot to-day measure things as we measured them in the other years, or accept without question the conditions to which we had been accustomed. If you come from the vast destructions and indifferences of war you are apt to be impatient of custom and to deny that of itself it has any force. Things must justify themselves if they are to endure; they cannot claim a right to persist simply because they have been in existence for a long time. No law or tradition

or habit which cannot prove its righteousness or its usefulness can demand any consideration, nor is it in the least likely to receive it. For we have seen the shaking of the foundations of the world.

We look at England in these days no longer as aliens. Here is something which belongs to us and to our kind, by a right more sacred than that of purchase. We have been fighting to save these pleasant acres and these happy towns from the fate of France and Flanders, and our friends have died in that service. It is certain that they did not die in defence of the possessions of any landlord, and we are quite confident that we would not have endured what we have endured in any such cause. When we went we were beginning to understand that after all the country is ours, and we return with that consciousness of possession enhanced.

If a nation is engaged in a little war it may succeed in disregarding its soldiers when the war is over. It may consider that their pay, their medals and their occasional pensions are sufficient reward for their services, and dismiss them without thought or care for what becomes of them. But it is a different

matter when a generation is placed under arms and given experience of battle. When an army is numbered by millions it is a force which must be reckoned with in anything but a military autocracy. You cannot tell so great a gathering of men to go about their business, and if they happen to have ideas of their own you will have to listen to them. If no more than a few hundred thousands of us had been needed for this war we might have ended our days in the workhouse as other soldiers have done after other wars, but there are the millions.

We, the people of England, have been fighting for England, and returning we consider this land which belongs to us and to our dead. We do not come with any elaborate ideas about land nationalisation. We are not busy with economic theories or the creed of any body of reformers. We are quite simply but quite definitely conscious that England belongs to her children, and all this tangle of grocers and drapers and makers of pills does not trouble us at all. We have learnt something about the true position of these people who have put fences and notice-boards round the best of England, and we are

not respecting them any more, neither are we afraid of them and their gamekeepers and all their apparatus of protection.

I want to insist that the returning soldier does not come in any sense as a revolutionary. There is not going to be a turning upside down of the social system after the war. We have no idea of presenting ourselves before the assembled landlords with machine-guns and violent demands for three acres and a cow for every man who has worn khaki. We have no visions of Utopian truculence in our minds, nor any desire to plough up the parks for potato patches. But we have that consciousness of possession.

Here is this land which we and our generation have served. It is a land having great wealth of many kinds. It is fertile also, with great spaces where men may live honourably, winning food from the earth for themselves and their fellows. It is worthy of splendid forests, and it has pasture for sheep and cattle innumerable. Also it has fine places for the homes of men, tall hills and moors for the exercise and delight of their bodies, and pleasant water running happily in its valleys, and it will not be withheld from us any more, neither from

our labour nor from our inhabiting—this our inheritance.

It may be that in the time to come the wealthy people will think to return to the old order, and it may be a little difficult to persuade them that that order is dead. They may imagine that when our ships are free of the seas once more there will be no longer any occasion for the growing of food in England, and they may seek to return the acres to idleness and all the countryside to the business of serving their leisure; they may even raise again that chorus of advice to Englishmen to go away from England. But they will be faced by something quite unlike the old passive acquiescence. That acquiescence was founded in part on despair and in part on ignorance. We did not see any hope of changing a condition of things which made prosperity the sole test of worthiness, and we did not know that England was so beautiful or could be so useful. To-day we know that prosperity is only one, and by no means the most important, of the tests by which the citizen must be measured—and we have discovered England.

These pleasant, fruitful acres will never be allowed to lie once more in barren splendour,

now that we have found their worth and power. For years after the war, while the nations are recovering from the shock and strain of the conflict, we shall have need of every ounce of food that can be grown in England, and our people will have become accustomed to the service of the soil, nor will it be an easy matter to hustle them back to the towns. There is more to be said on this matter, but it belongs to another chapter. The only point for the present is the shining fact that we who have learned to love England have learned also that England is ours, and that she will lie no longer in bondage to the few.

Her fields shall be happy with corn, and her little valleys with the homes of men.

3. CONCERNING BEER

IN the early months of the war it became fashionable to declare for total abstinence until the return of peace. Those were the days when most of us thought that the struggle would be short and that the pledge would not bring any great hardship. It was only a matter of a little while.

What has become of those pledges I do not know. Some of them may remain in operation. In a country so packed with obstinate people as our own, it is practically certain that some who made the promise are still holding out. Others have obtained dispensations from their doctors, and others, I suppose, have explained to themselves that they had no idea it would last so long, and that they cannot do their work so capably if they continue to deny themselves. I only know that, in the course of a fairly wide experience, I have not during the past three years found any man who claimed to be an abstainer from alcohol for the duration of the war, and in the Army itself, whether in the ranks or in the officers' messes, an abstainer

is so rare as to be something of a curiosity. He is one of those unexpected things which one can never discover without a certain surprise. There is, of course, respect for his principles, but at the same time it seems a little unnatural. . . . One comes home and finds columns of the familiar total abstinence propaganda in the advertisement pages of the newspapers, and that sense of something forced and unnatural grows stronger than ever.

There was, of course, the time when there was nothing unnatural about it, when all this argument and setting out of statistics was alive and important. In those days some people approved of it and some detested it, but there were few who ignored it. The drink problem, as it was called, was the subject of our greatest and most enduring controversy, and there was never any rest from it. Whatever came and went in the way of political discussion, that remained. Letters and articles were continually appearing in the papers about it, meetings were always being held, sermons were preached and books were published. We began to be aware of the conflict very shortly after leaving the cradle, and it followed us down all the way of life. There were many who believed that drink

alone was responsible for everything that was wrong and ugly and sorrowful in our national life. They believed that all poverty, disease and lunacy were due to the consumption of alcohol; they argued fiercely and endlessly to prove their case, and they sought to abolish the thing which they hated. Naturally they found themselves in opposition to those who had any financial interest in the production and sale of it, so there were two parties in existence, and between them they made so much noise and threatened such elaborate disturbance of our habits that practically all of us were brought into the quarrel on one side or the other. We were not permitted to ignore it. Both sides needed our support and made mighty efforts to obtain it, and we were never safe from their arguments.

Those arguments will be remembered. They were so lurid and the statements were so flatly contradictory. One side declared and sought to prove that drink was bringing England to destruction, and the other asserted that the greatness of our empire was built on foundations of beneficent beer. The strictest watch was kept over all eminent people lest they said anything which might be used in support of one party or the other.

The least and most careless remark was noted and filed for quotation at the right time, and the Bible—that storehouse of remarkable contradictions—was ransacked for texts in aid of each contention. Statistics were accumulated and tormented till they proved, after the fashion of statistics, that each of the opponents was right; and the rest of us, while uneasily conscious that both of them were wrong, were practically forced to declare ourselves on one side or the other. We had the tumult of licensing measures to add to the rest of the clamour at election times, and the fight was carried on in Parliament with the same passion and the same disregard for truth on both sides. Many industrious speakers, writers and artists made a good living out of it, and it seemed as if there was to be no end to the quarrel. There came the ending of peace and the Army took us. We had the period of training and went out to our business beyond the seas. Returning, we find the old antagonists still hurling printed words at one another, and to-day they are like nothing so much as a couple of schoolboys gesticulating and shouting mutual defiance under the shadow of a volcano.

War has brought home to millions of our

people the reality of the thing called work. Of course we worked before, very many of us in many different ways, but there were few who laboured to the limits of bodily endurance, or who laboured in more ways than one. For most of us the occupation of our days was the repetition of a single task, calling for no very great exertion of mind or body. To be sure, we were tired at the end of the day, but it was the weariness of monotony rather than of exhaustion, and we sought in our leisure for distraction rather than refreshment. Comparatively few of us had any real knowledge of hunger or thirst, or had realised the extent of the power of our bodies. Our food and our drink were pleasant recreations rather than stark necessities; they were habitual things which we took as we took our sleep at certain appointed hours, because it was our custom rather than because our bodies were crying out for them.

During the past four years we have learned many lessons and we have become acquainted with things which were only names before. Realities and the experience of reality have been our portion, and theories do not appeal to us. We have come to an understanding of hunger and thirst and weariness, and we

have discovered the joy and the value of food and drink and rest. These things have not happened in the Army alone. Very many of those who stayed at home have toiled so valiantly that they have made the same discoveries. Men and women alike have been working as they never worked before, living crowded lives, using all the power that was in them. And to lead such a life even for six months is to learn more about the drink question than could possibly be learnt in six years of listening to speeches and reading books and articles.

It is granted at once that alcohol is a poison. Taken in sufficient quantities it is a deadly thing, capable of killing the strongest. It is, moreover, insidious in its appeal, especially to some people who, owing to some physical or mental defect, do not seem able to resist the desire for it. In excessive though not fatal doses it injures the body and the mind, and a craving is established which leads the sufferer to perform shameful actions in order to obtain it. His moral sense is destroyed. He no longer cares what price is paid, nor by whom it is paid so long as his imperative desire is satisfied, and if he is a poor man both he and those who depend upon him come swiftly to destruction, and his case is quoted

as one more instance of the horrible evils of drink. It is a peculiar comment on the morality of our advocates of total abstinence that we do not hear from them anything about the wickedness of the rich drunkards who hold high positions, or any demand that they should be removed from their positions, but that, perhaps, is one of the things which the war is going to change: we shall see presently.

That is by the way. Having admitted that alcohol is a poison and that it brings some people to disaster—what are we going to do about it? The total abstainer demands, of course, that it shall be abolished at once and utterly. The brewer retaliates with a number of unimpressive figures which seem to prove that grain which is used for the making of beer is if anything more profitably used than grain which is put to any other service whatsoever. Both these people, the fanatic with his list of awful examples and the brewer with one eye on his dividends, are, to say the least of it, untrustworthy and their contentions are immaterial. They do not concern us who have toiled and are hungry and thirsty and very weary. We are no more terrified by the awful examples than we are incited by the brewer's figures: quite simply and

happily we are going to drink beer because it is the best drink known to us, because it will refresh us more than anything else, coming as an excellent crown to the labour of the day.

There is the conclusion of the whole matter. If the conditions of life in wartime have not abolished the drink problem they have done a great deal to simplify it. In the other days so many people, and especially those who were very poor, wasted a lot of money and health on drink because life was so unpleasant that they sought some brief oblivion. They crowded into horrible public-houses and drank cheap spirits, not because they were thirsty but because their minds were very sick. Their work was so uncertain that it did not seem to matter very much whether or not they were perfectly fit to do it. Life was a grim adventure, and they had come to the conclusion that the only thing to do about the future was to let it take care of itself. For the present they had a little money, some empty hours, and a desire for escape. The public-house offered the only way they knew to a certain happiness of mind and body, and they went to take their drug.

It is true, of course, that a certain amount of this drug-taking is going on to-day, but the amount is almost incredibly small in comparison

with that which was common before the war. Most of us are too busy now, and there is so much work to be done which demands a clear eye and a steady hand. It is work, too, which brings honest weariness in its train and an honest thirst which has nothing to do with that old craving for oblivion. We drink because we are in need of drink, and we drink beer because, as I have said, we cannot find anything better.

Naturally the restrictions which are now in force have their effect. The public-houses are not open for so long; they have less to sell, and the price of everything has gone up tremendously, while the quality has in most cases gone down. But restrictions alone would never have had the effect which is to be seen on every side to-day. Indeed it has appeared in the past that one of the surest ways to induce an Englishman to do a thing was to order him not to do it, and if in normal times such restrictions had been applied, the police force of the country would have been kept busy dealing with evasions of the orders. Some of the restrictions too, such as that which made treating illegal, were so foolish that they were very quickly and completely ignored, but for the rest they have been accepted in a

fashion which speaks of something more than empty pockets or of patriotic abstinence. The pockets of civilians are rarely empty in these days, and there are very few of those who used to drink a great deal who would be temperate from a sense of duty for four years. The Liquor Control Board may have had something to do with the reduction of the amount of drinking and the decline in the number of cases of drunkenness, but it does appear that far more is due to the changed conditions of life, to the greater general prosperity, the certainty of employment and the increase in the amount of real work performed by all classes. It is a beverage that is required to-day, not a drug; refreshment is sought instead of forgetfulness.

. . . . . .

There have been sweeping accusations made against this nation in the past, and we have made most of them ourselves, with the energetic aid of the apostles of total abstinence, but to-day we can see how much those accusations were worth. The Englishman is not naturally a drunkard, but he has been what his life has made him. The ugliness which streamed out of the cheaper public-houses at closing time in the old days was the effect of

something other than original sin. There are the few diseased members of society, but it is beginning to be understood that they are diseased and not merely wicked, and they can be dealt with. For the rest it is only required that life shall be interesting, healthful, with time and opportunity for recreation and reasonable freedom from care, and England can be both free and sober.

And there is something else which is going to have its own considerable effect on the future. In the old days there was a very general agreement that a woman must not be seen going into a public-house. It was a thoroughly bad idea. It parted men from their wives at the time when they were feeling most companionable and at peace with the world; very often it drove the woman to sly, secret drinking, and it made it possible for the public-houses to become the horrible places which they are to-day.

The man who has served in France has seen in operation a better plan than that. He has seen men going with their wives to the cafés in the evening and sitting happily together in company with their friends, and he has realised that a woman does not necessarily acquire a damaged reputation because she goes to a

place where drink is publicly consumed. So he begins to wonder why this should not be possible in England also.

But there comes remembrance. So many of our English public-houses are foul and stained and dissolute. It is not within their doors that one would willingly take any woman, and there is a certain shame in the mere thought of acquaintance with them. It is true that they are what they are because the men of England have gone to drink by themselves, but it is also true that, being what they are, we could never hope to use them as the Frenchman uses his clean, happy cafés.

Yet these are not the only places. There is memory of very excellent inns which one has found in town and country alike, of gardens with tables under the trees, of floors where mighty casks are ranged above the clean-swept floor, of rooms bright with polished metal and glass, of hearty, friendly people in whose welcome there is nothing mercenary, whose hatred of ugly viciousness is as keen as that of the most intemperate advocate of total abstinence. With the memories and with the thought of this excellent custom of France to set beside them there come new ideas and a perception of possibilities. And I believe that

if we learn to take our girls with us when we go for a drink there will be no drink problem left to worry about, and the horrible public-houses will either be reformed or starved out of existence.

Yet another consequence comes from the long sojourning of so many of our men in lands beyond the seas, and that is the discovery—for it amounts to a discovery—of wine as a beverage. More will be heard of this in the future, and already people are asking why the duty on wine should be so high as to place it beyond the reach of all but those who are fairly well to do. Given sound wine and good beer, the demand for spirits would drop at once. There will be an opportunity after the war for some Chancellor of the Exchequer to take a step which will do more for the sobriety of England than any amount of restrictions. The man who will take most of the duty off wine and double the duty on spirits will have earned the thanks of all the generations to come. And if the total abstainers wish to do something really valuable they had better offer a mighty prize to the inventor who shall produce a non-intoxicating drink which is fit to put beside either wine or beer as a beverage for hard-working people in need of refreshment.

4. OUR LADIES OF TOIL

WAR has taken the women of England and set them by the side of their men in a comradeship that shall endure. It found them restless, uncertain of their position, conscious of many wrongs. There had been the years of an entirely mad propaganda of violence which had made more enemies than friends. Behind all this the great mass of the women of the nation had been reaching out to something which most of them found it hard to define; vaguely disturbed, they sought for some better thing than they had known. With some the desire took shape in the demand for the right to vote for members of Parliament, but the majority realised that the vote could be nothing more than a token, a symbol of that new order for whose dawn they were waiting. They realised quite plainly that the right to go to the polling station and make a mark against a name printed on a slip of paper was a small thing in comparison of their desire,

but it seemed a step on the way. Meanwhile the majority of men looked on with a kind of amused interest, with a certain superior kindliness which was apt to degenerate at times into irritability and even—when they discovered the immense seriousness which lay behind the whole movement—to downright anger. Various catch phrases, some of them solemnly futile, such as "woman's place is the home," and some of them purely abominable, were used to express their attitude, and various ideas which would have been discreditable to prehistoric savages were circulated with enthusiasm.

There came the tempest and the tramp of marching men as they went down to the sea. In the old stories it was the woman's part to gird the armour upon her knight and then stay quietly at home, looking after the house and saying her prayers till he returned, and there were men in England in that autumn of 1914 who imagined that their women would play that traditional part. They were very anxious. They had spent their years under the impression that they had given all the care and guidance, and they were filled with dismay at the thought of what might happen to these poor, defenceless creatures left alone

for the first time, faced with the task of living their lives unaided. They went and they worried their way round the war, wondering all the time how things could possibly go on at home now that they were away, and imagining disaster. I have heard so much of their troubles, and I have censored so many letters full of advice and directions, and I wondered sometimes what the women thought about it all.

Away beyond the horizon there came to us tidings of what they were doing. The newspapers told how women were taking up one task after another, and the advertisements were even more eloquent than the news pages. But somehow the announcements lacked reality, and they were not assisted by the pictures in the weekly papers of society beauties wearing strange clothes in which they were alleged to perform unusual tasks. Those pictures made the whole business seem like a new game, and one did not feel at all inclined to take it seriously. Now and then a letter would announce that some one had gone to make munitions, but that did not sound very serious either, for we were far away and we knew nothing whatever about the making of

shells. Some thought that girls were just doing their best to carry on with the men's work while they were away, admired their pluck in tackling the job, and admired still more the reckless daring of the employer who allowed them within a mile of it. But most regarded it as a pastime and wrote cheery, patronising letters to say how glad they were that they had found something to occupy their minds. Really there are times when a man feels that it is his duty to apologise to the entire universe for the conceit that is in men.

There came the time of return and we saw with our own eyes the things of which we had read, in which we had not believed. Set free for a little while by wounds or sickness we went about England among the people we had known, and began to discover the truth of the matter. We found all these women and girls, all these dear helpless creatures whom we had sought to shield so carefully, out in the world doing real work and doing it well, with strength and valiant hearts and increasing skill.

For those who have been at home all the time I suppose the surprise has not been so great. They have watched the change from

the beginning and seen the stages of it accomplished one by one. But to go from an England whose women if they worked outside their homes at all were mainly going delicately about delicate occupations, and to return to an England whose women were performing countless tasks which only men had tackled before, was to get the full value and measure of the change and to be reduced to a condition of profitable amazement. Day by day one discovered something more; in town and country alike there were revelations waiting at every turn of the road. There were girls perched high on the drivers' seats of the great mail vans, handling their horses with careless, confident ease; girls were hurrying along with window-cleaners' ladders, steering milk-carts, selling tickets on trams, wrestling with piles of luggage at the stations. Girls were on the farms and in the forests, dashing about on motor bicycles, and pouring in their thousands out of the munition works at the end of their shift. . . . It happens that I have just looked up from my tent and seen a neat, uniformed figure walking swiftly across from the cookhouse of the camp in which I am living at present. It is curious to remember the old days when

no woman was ever seen about a camp and our cooks were, as a rule, the most disreputable set of scoundrels in the battalion, and the dirtiest. It all seems so far away and in the light of present knowledge so very unreasonable. It is really curious that it should have needed the stress of a great war to remind us that for every man who can cook there are about a thousand women.

. . . . . .

There have been, of course, endless criticisms of the women's work in every sphere which they have taken over. I have heard complaints from all sorts of people, and some of the papers have kept their readers supplied with jests at the expense of the woman worker and accounts of her shortcomings. If you were to take these grumbles seriously you might conclude that, after all, the experiment has been a failure and that women have proved their inability to take even temporarily the place of men; but in such a nation of grumblers as our own no one pays much attention to grumbling, and most of us have our own experiences to set in the balance against the sour comments of the unfriendly.

It is fairly obvious, surely, that no woman

ought to be expected to be able to do at a day's or a week's notice the work of a man who has spent years at the one job. No one would expect a man fresh to the business to be the equal of an old hand, and it is a little hard to see why any employer should be disappointed if the women he has taken on are not immediately capable of doing as much as the men he has been compelled to release. But it is certain that most of the complaints arise from that disappointment, and most of the stories in the papers are based on little blunders which no one would have noticed if they had been made by men new to the work. It is quite unfair, of course, but there is nothing in it to worry about, and the work that the women have done and are doing has nothing to fear from criticism, nor can any amount of grumbling take away from the splendour of their achievement. All of us have seen them at work, and we know how the work has been done.

We have seen them at work on the trams and omnibuses and in the stations of our big towns, alert and smiling and very capable. Their coming to this public business has brought something quite new and very pleasant to our journeying. They are, most of them,

such happy, friendly people, ready to give any help that they can, and not ashamed to ask for help if they happen to require it. They may be pretty or they may be plain, but they have charm, and they spend it freely as they go about their occupation. It is no matter of sex attraction. There have been and there will continue to be flirtations and occasional romances mixed up with their work, but beyond all this there is a touch, an atmosphere which only women can create —something which brings a sense of increased friendliness and decency to life, making the world a kinder place.

It is going to be a very good thing for us, this coming of so many women into the public service. In the old days the ordinary man's experience of women at work was limited to barmaids. There is no word to be said against those brave, merry, hard-worked girls. They had a task that was frequently difficult and sometimes unpleasant. They were brought into contact with men very much at their ease and occasionally at their worst. They were exposed to all the activities of that particular form of caddishness which sees humour in filthily suggestive talk addressed

to a woman who cannot escape from it; if they were in anyway good-looking they were objects of inflamed desire and subjected to constant slimy solicitation. The fashion in which some men used to see fit to talk at and to barmaids has led to a certain amount of entirely healthy violence before now, but there was not always some one at hand to throw the cad into the street, and the girls had to put up with it as best they could, with only their wits to rely upon for their defence. Inevitably many of them developed a freedom of speech and manner which reacted upon their customers, so that even decent men spoke to and before them in a fashion which they would not have adopted before any other woman.

There is nothing whatever to be said for prudishness. It is the cause of endless trouble and of a tremendous quantity of dirt. It leads continually to sly looks that are more poisonously hurtful than words, and to a secret uncleanness that instinctively believes the worst of every one and puts the worst construction on the most harmless words and actions. Prudishness and prurience have a trick of going hand in hand, and light is in this as in all matters the most active enemy of

disease. But while we may and indeed must realise that it is desirable for men and women to talk quite candidly together on due occasion of those matters of sex which work so powerfully in us all, we have to realise that they are scarcely the subjects for general and certainly not for public conversation, and one may detest prudishness and yet realise that a certain decency of restraint adds to the seemliness of life.

Towards that decency these new hosts of women-workers are leading us. They are everywhere, and there does not exist in their case that tradition of freedom of speech which we had in the case of the barmaids. They are very largely an unknown quantity, and even the most unpleasant man hesitates when he is faced with the unknown and cannot tell whether or to what extent his filthiness will be resented. Most of us know or are related to girls who have gone forward into the working line in this time of need, and for their sake, if for no other reason, we are moved to treat the others with respect. And there is, too, a feeling that it would be the most abominable ingratitude to behave towards these gallant volunteers in any way which could

cause them discomfort or hamper them in the work which they have so bravely undertaken.

So there has arisen an entirely new feeling between the men and women of to-day. There are, I know, some men of diseased imagination and detestable ideals who can never look at a woman with anything but the eyes of desire, who mistake all friendliness for invitation, all kindness for surrender. But it is permitted to us to believe that they are exceptional, and it is quite certain that there are very many men who can recognise, accept and value the frank friendliness which is increasing and becoming increasingly possible to-day. It is a friendliness which has no hidden thought or design at the back of it. Very often the woman is married; usually she has her heart fixed on some man who will be her mate presently if all is well, and there is no shadow of disloyalty on her cheery welcoming of a chance-met acquaintance. They are at ease together as men may be at ease with each other, with just that subtle difference of the cleaner tongue, the more decent thoughts, the little added refinements of conduct.

If the benefit of all this is general it is particular also, and the man who comes home to his working woman finds a change beyond his imagining. She has been doing her part even as he has done his, and she is no longer the helpless little thing of his foolish imagining, but a comrade, fit and able to look a man in the eyes and to stand by his side and not behind him in all the occasions of life. She is, as she might have been long ago if only they had realised it, a reasonable human being who can be a friend as well as a lover, a playmate or a workmate at need as well as the most beautiful and most sacred thing in his life. She is no longer someone to be worshipped for a few months and left at home to drudge for all the rest of her life. She has come forward to take the place which she was always capable of winning, which she has now so splendidly claimed and made her own.

The man who finds such a woman waiting for him is not going to shut her out of nine-tenths of his life as so many men shut out their women in the old days. He will want her with him all the time. There is among men that feeling which sends so many of them to clubs where no women are admitted, but

in the majority of cases the women have only themselves to blame for the setting up of those refuges, and if they will go on as they are going to-day they will have little need to fear them in the future; there will be very much less of that sitting and waiting for the return of the absent husband. There will be more going out together, to the lasting benefit of both of them, and friendship will deepen with the years.

There are anxious souls who are already asking what will happen when the men come back, and whether the women will be ready to give up the freedom they have won and return to their homes, leaving the men to carry on as in the days before the war. There have been letters in the papers and discussions both public and private, but really this anxiety seems very unnecessary. The nature and the instincts of human beings do not change simply because they have gained a wider experience and a broader grasp of life, and the hands of her child have not lost their power over the mother's heart, nor is it likely that the normal woman will ever find anything so entirely fascinating and delightful as just an ordinary baby which happens to be her own.

It is possible that there may be a certain amount of friction at first, a few mistakes and a few misunderstandings, since it is certain that we are not coming out into Utopia at the end of the war, but it is reasonable to suppose that these will be quite unimportant, and that they will be smoothed away in time by the working of the most venerable forces with which we are acquainted.

It is certain that women will not willingly or as a whole go back from the positions which they have occupied in these days, nor is it possible to see why they should. If they can do the work, no one has any right to deny them access to it, and it is certainly intolerable that a woman who is doing the same work as men should be paid at any different rate. But this is not the place for a discussion of those economic problems which surround the question of woman's place in the world. They form altogether too large a subject to be dragged in at the end of a brief chapter, and—though they will come up for consideration directly we begin to set the world in order once more—they are not immediately connected with the matters I had in mind at the beginning. It is enough for the present that our women

have found themselves and that we returning have found them.

War has not spared them many of its horrors. The German has seen to that. He has given to them to taste of wounds and death as well as of all that long agony of waiting which has always been the woman's portion in war. They have faced these without flinching, and they have sought and accepted weariness of body in long hours of toil as well. They have come out and taken their place in the ranks of those who are fighting, and they have proved themselves great comrades in these days of great necessity.

They have the parliamentary vote to show as a trophy of the victory they have won over prejudice and ignorance, but there remains a better thing than that. There remains that new comradeship for a beginning of a more excellent way of life than any we have known, a foundation upon which the generations to come shall build.

5. OF KINGSHIP IN ENGLAND

CONSIDER the words which I quoted at the beginning of this book. Holding the Bible in his hand the recruit was instructed to say, " I swear by Almighty God that I will be faithful and bear true Allegiance to King George the Fifth, His Heirs and Successors, and that I will, as in duty bound, faithfully defend His Majesty, His Heirs and Successors, in Person, Crown and Dignity against all enemies. . . . So help me, God." Those words are as a gate through which all who enter the Army must pass either by repeating them or assenting to them. There is no way round them, and since the war began they have received at least the formal assent of very many who had been accustomed to express disapproval of any kind of monarchy. The form is one which we have inherited from older and simpler times. It is a part of that solemn fabric of our national life which took shape in the course of the centuries, survived

through periods of illimitable change, and has come at last to the test of war, which has power to destroy all things which being dead retain only the semblance of life.

For there is in war no respect of forms however venerable or of traditions however sacred. The battleship going into action must be stripped of all superfluous, inflammable things, and the soldier must take with him only those matters which are essential. So too, a nation fighting for its life can afford no lumber, and must cast away all that does not directly and materially help in the business of the time. It must jettison all sorts of theories, customs and laws ; it must put down many who had seemed to be mighty.

We have paid our tribute to necessity in England during these years of conflict. The railways were put under State control, land-owners were told that their rights must give way to the needs of the Army, registration was brought in to compel every man to give account of himself, industries have been checked or wiped out altogether, farmers have been ordered to plough their land, food has been controlled, light and heat are issued according to scale—in a hundred ways we

have parted from out traditions and instituted a new order for the more effectual service of our time. We may have been slow to take some of the necessary steps, but at least we have proved that we are not afraid to alter all our way of life once the need is made plain. It is difficult to imagine anything which our people would not do and endure for the sake of winning this war if the appeal was made to them, for however detestable may be the conduct of the few it is certain that the nation has set its heart on victory.

. . . . . .

The world has become uncomfortable for kings. Thrones have fallen within the memory of those who are still very young, and others are quite visibly ready to fall. It has seemed at times as though the world had passed beyond monarchy, and there are very many who believe that the republic is the ideal state. They are quite apart from those passionate people who hate all rulers on principle, and are as ready to assassinate a President of France as a Czar of Russia. They are ordinary, quiet-living citizens, not influenced by Socialism or any of the wilder theories of modern days, and they could not be described

as revolutionaries. It is just that having considered the matter they have come to the conclusion that it is better for a nation to have at its head a chosen man than a man who is nothing but the son of his father.

No one can deny that that feeling was gaining ground in England before the war. There had arisen steadily but very surely a profound distrust of the hereditary system of government, and those who defended the House of Lords found it increasingly difficult to defend the principle that a man has a right to govern because he is the son of his father. It is only a step from objecting to the House of Lords to a very critical consideration of the monarchy, and an increasing number of people were taking that step. In the days of Edward VII. it used to be said that if England were ever turned into a republic he would be elected as its first president—proof enough of the general approval of him as ruler and of the growing dissatisfaction with the system which gave him his position. He died and was buried and his son reigned in his place, and the volume of criticism gathered strength.

It might have passed beyond the stage of criticism but for the fact that the monarchy

in England is so genuinely inoffensive. No one could point to any act which would justify a change. Indeed most people who went beyond the general objection to the hereditary principle based most of their criticism on that very point, and explained that it would be an advantage if we had a ruler who did things occasionally. It was pointed out that the Presidents of the United States, for instance, are really notable people, leaders of their nation, and there was the suggestion that it would be well for us if we were in the same position.

But in addition to this placid criticism there was the increasing unrest of the industrial world. The millions who were more or less represented by the Labour members in Parliament had their own quarrel with all aristocratic institutions, including the monarchy. Those were the days when a tenuous belief in internationalism was widely held, when many looked for the day that should see the union of the workers of the world in one vast federation which should make its own just laws, securing to each that which his heart desired. Crowns and principalities and powers were to be abolished in

that day, and there was to be an end of the oppression of the rich and of the wars which, we were assured, were made by the rich solely for their own advantage.

No one who was in close and constant touch with many classes of people during the first fourteen years of this century could mistake what was going on or how the mind of the nation was working. The great, grimy towns were packed with angry people meditating on countless grievances, some imaginary and some very real. The tireless propaganda of the Socialists had that effect, if it had no other; the agitators could insist most effectively on the evils of the existing system if they could not speak quite so clearly of the system which was to replace it. If they were uncertain and divided on questions of construction, they were united and powerful in criticism. Indeed they had little to do beyond describing existing conditions. The facts were bad enough, and it was impossible to withhold sympathy from those who, looking at things as they were, found them very evil and demanded a change. . . . I have my own memories of membership of Socialist societies, of meetings of dingy, violent men and women in shabby

little rooms, of crowds that gathered round speakers in the open, of the self-consciously intellectual Fabians, of country club-houses where the Clarion Fellowship would meet on Sunday afternoons and scandalise the villagers by playing riotously happy football matches before admiring crowds of cigarette-smoking girls.

All these, of course, regarded the passing of the monarchy as an inevitable part of the changes which they desired. They had no personal feeling in the matter. It was simply that there was no place for kings in the world which they desired. The constitution of that world was very nebulous, and the fashion of its governance changed with every writer who produced his Utopia and with every dreamer who spoke from a public platform, but it had two enduring features—there were no longer to be any poor people or any hereditary aristocrats.

Following the years of the sowing came the years of increasing strife. Labour disputes entered a new phase. The old trade union leaders began to be discredited and to lose the power which they had held for so long. The younger members rebelled against them

and repudiated the agreements which they made with employers, so that it became increasingly difficult to settle the frequent quarrels. Violence became more and more general and strange, distressing things were seen in England. There was a morning when I sat on a wall of a goods-yard in Manchester and watched the detraining of troops who had been sent from York to hold the rioters in check. Those were days when a newspaper man going about his business stood in some peril of injury, and it was a common experience to have stones thrown at the car as one hurried from place to place. There were riots in Liverpool and ugly happenings at London Docks; every fresh trouble in the Welsh coal-fields was more threatening than the last, and on the Clyde there was black, increasing bitterness. We began to experience such wholesale stoppages of work as the coal strike which cleared the smoke out of the sky over all the industrial North, and the railway strike which paralysed two-thirds of England for a week. We were told that these things were only a beginning. There was constant talk of the general strike which should presently put its grip on all the land.

It was a hard time for all who loved England. One could not doubt that there remained a great body of goodwill in the world, but it seemed powerless, and our fate was given into the keeping of those who were angry, while our nominal rulers grew more and more ineffectual. It was difficult to tell where we were drifting or what lay before us, and in the darker moments one feared for the future. For the poor became daily more desperate as many of the rich grew more arrogant, and in the shadow of all this gathering darkness those whom we called the governing classes went carelessly on their pleasant way. In the midst of them was set the monarchy anxiously aware that something was wrong, very eager to do something to set it right, and pathetically powerless to do anything.

So was it in England four years ago, all through that perfect spring and early summer. London was very beautiful at that time, happy with flowers by day and radiant by night. England had never seemed so wealthy or so pleasantly at peace, and there were the multitudes of well-dressed, idle men and women. Day by day there were recited in the great cathedrals those prayers for the King and for

the Royal Family; night by night the entertainments of the nation were closed by the playing of the National Anthem, and it might have seemed that all was well. But away in the great striving cities, away where the wheels spin for ever above the mine-shafts, away where the calm of the midnight sky is torn by the blaze of the furnaces, away where the smoke inhabits the air so that you may hardly see the stars, there were men and women who toiled and watched as they toiled for the coming of a new day. There were keen, irreconcilable people who hated the world as it was and worked unrestingly to change it. There were tens of thousands who heard the National Anthem with a frown, and millions to whom it was meaningless. Beyond the North Sea the Prussian was putting the finishing touches to his preparations.

. . . . . .

It is a night in England, a night of May in this fourth year of war. Just now the bugles were sounding the last brief call that marks the closing of the day, and the camps will very soon be silent. Far in the distance there are little dull sounds, almost the ghosts of sound. They are the guns at work in France.

They are very busy, those guns, and there are very many thousands of them, and around them are the millions of our men—your friends and mine. Behind the guns are the millions of those who made them, who do continually serve them. To the shaping of those tiny sounds that reach me there has gone the toil of very many men and women. The iron and the coal were sought that steel might come. There was the great striving of the forge as the white, searing metal took shape, with the beating of great hammers and the rage of the screaming planes. There was work of infinite delicacy to be performed to complete the labour of tremendous force till presently the guns were ready to be sent down to the sea and across to their appointed place. Then, that the labour might not be in vain, the shells must follow.

You know something of the way they work, those bonny girls of ours. Night and day they are busy, busy with metal, with strange perilous substances, shaping and preparing the great metal cases, filling them and making perfect their labour, till the shells are on their way to feed the waiting guns. There is all the work of these girls and of the men who are

with them, and of the multitudes who make ready the things which they must use. The chain goes reaching away till it touches the far islands of the sea and toilers in desert places, men who labour in great forests, scientists masked from the peril of their still laboratories, a very great company. And presently the shells are there beside the guns where those friends of ours must deal with them.

There are the millions of them at work in France at this hour, where the earth is shaken by the great voices of the guns which reach me so faintly. They went to that work from every part of England and from every occupation, and most of them went freely, of their own accord, waiting for no compulsion. You can picture them at their business in trench and gun-emplacement, steel helmets tilted over the brown faces, gas masks ready to hand. Their uniforms are stained and shabby; they wear the red and blue chevrons that mark their service and the thin gold stripes bearing witness to their suffering. They are the men who lived and worked in England in the old days, the men who were angry and desperate, who shared in the strikes and the riots, who

attended the fierce little meetings. They are in the Army now; they have been in it for a long time, and at the beginning of their service they all promised to defend King George the Fifth in Person, Crown and Dignity against all enemies.

Of course it would be ridiculous to suggest that they had undergone a sudden change of heart and decided that after all it was their duty to die if necessary in defence of the King. It is doubtful if they were thinking of him at all at that hour—I am quite certain that I was not. There was the time when personal devotion to the Sovereign was a very real thing, controlling the actions and lives of men, but that feeling has very largely passed from the England of to-day. So we who took the Oath of Allegiance were not consciously binding ourselves to the service of King George the man. He stood at that time for a symbol of England, and it was in that sense that we spoke his name. And that, I believe, is the root of the matter in the question of the position of the Throne in England to-day.

On that August Bank Holiday at the beginning of these red years very many thousands of us went to Buckingham Palace and

cheered beneath the windows till the King and Queen came out on the balcony and stood there high above us. It was wild, passionate cheering, and there was singing and the waving of hats—a notable enthusiasm. But there was little or nothing personal about it. We were not concerned with the man and woman who stood there. We had quite suddenly discovered that we were English, and here were the tokens of England, of all that land which made us, of all that story which claimed us. Later on some of us went to make hostile noises at the token of Germany in the shape of the German Embassy, but all the time there was the great crowd at Buckingham Palace.

So in an hour the King stepped forward and became significant, even to the multitude of those who in time past had regarded his position with indifference or even with enmity. Here was the symbol and centre of authority in the hour when authority was needed as it had never been needed before; here was a banner in the hour when a banner must be unfurled.

By making it significant the war gave monarchy its chance in England. Whether

and to what extent that chance has been profitably used is a question that will not be fully answered in our time, but it appears certain that our present form of government has obtained in these years a reprieve which no one who watched the times would have dared to predict at the beginning of 1914. It was not so much that the nation was disloyal as unloyal. Loyalty, indeed, had become a dead and almost a detestable word. The platitudes about "our gracious Sovereign" which were used by leader-writers and similar people remote from reality, were to very many definitely and almost intolerably irritating, and the words of the National Anthem were simply ludicrous.

They are not so very much less ludicrous to-day. There are still moods and moments when one is asking whether graciousness and nobility are the outstanding qualities of King George v. They may be, of course, but that is a point which one cannot decide because the evidence is lacking, and there is a certain difficulty about singing the words. Yet because the tune is what it is, it has power.

All this is rather difficult to describe. As an Englishman of my time I am trying to be

candid about a matter which has suffered in the past from a lack of candour, and that lack of candour has created pitfalls. People have not been honest with themselves or with each other over this question of kingship, and, in particular, there has been a vast amount of dishonest writing about it. Our newspapers have consistently used an artificial language of compliment when dealing with Royalty, and, they continue to use it. In an age when advertisement has become a science the advertising of the Royal Family is incredibly badly done. It is done so badly that the fact that it is advertisement is the first which the reader perceives. Read the accounts of one of the Queen's visits to a communal kitchen and you can almost see her looking round to see if the reporters are listening before she makes some kindly, commonplace remark to a customer in search of sausages. And the reporters appear to be in the conspiracy, for the remarks which they put into the mouths of the admiring onlookers are nearly always fatuous and impossible. There is every appearance of a general attempt to suggest that Queen Mary goes about the kitchens and the hospitals and the factories as a kind of radiant

angel, moving among mortals who marvel at her kindness and loveliness, whereas it is far more likely that they are marvelling at the fact that a woman with such unlimited opportunities for securing the very best should wear such dreadful hats.

There are some people, I suppose, who will regard that last sentence as almost indecently disrespectful, and that is just my trouble. It ought not to seem disrespectful to say in print that the Queen wears dreadful hats. Many people say as much in conversation who would quite naturally and with a good heart behave beautifully in the presence of Her Majesty. They do not feel, nor are they considered disrespectful for saying it, and I cannot for the life of me see why I should be considered disrespectful for writing it. But there has been created an atmosphere of artificiality, and a kind of tradition that in public one only says the very nicest things about Royalty, and says them in a phraseology which is a further outrage on sincerity.

The consequence is that all public writing about Royalty is under suspicion, and so, too, are those eternal photographs of Royal visits to the front, to factories and shipyards and

the rest. The King comes out better than any one in those pictures. He does contrive very often to look quite genially and genuinely interested in what is going on, but even he is so obviously stage-managed. You feel in looking at the paper not so much that the photographer has taken a shot at some unexpected, happy little incident, as that he had been instructed in advance to look out for the incident which had been rehearsed for weeks beforehand. And just because there is that feeling of preparation and of plan—resembling certain features of the Eatanswill election—the pictures are discounted. They look a great deal more like propaganda than the honest recording of interesting events, and when the ordinary man perceives the propaganda grinning through its camouflage he is more often annoyed than convinced.

It might be so different. At the end of the last paragraph I went over to the mess where various people were playing bridge and otherwise getting through the evening, and I said to one of them, "Have you ever run across the Prince of Wales in France?" "Oh yes," he said. "I met him on a bicycle one day and he came into our mess for a drink.

Jolly sound chap. Tells you not to be a bloody fool if you stand to attention when you are talking to him." The language may be regrettable, but that is a bit of sheer reporting and I am not responsible for the language. I am only telling you what was told to me, and I cannot help thinking that such a spontaneous statement is more valuable and gives a truer idea of the general feeling about the Prince of Wales than any number of stentorian paragraphs declaring that " the unabated popularity of His Royal Highness among all ranks was pleasantly evinced by a little incident which I chanced to witness the other day." Such rubbish always tempts one to conclude that the man who could write such horrid English was also telling a horrid lie, and the incident which may have been perfectly genuine and spontaneous is discounted at once.

. . . . . .

I have said that the war gave the monarchy its chance in England. Not only did it reveal to us the King as a significant, symbolic figure, but it also gave him unlimited opportunities of coming in contact with the people, of making them aware of his personality and of recreating that sense of personal loyalty

which was dead in so many of our hearts. It seems possible that, in spite of the newspapers, that has been done to a considerable extent. There must by this time be millions of people either in the Army or among those who are working at home who have seen him fairly close at hand, who have had some opportunity of getting an idea of the King as a human being. In so far as they have been favourably impressed, there has been created between them and the King a bond of personal sympathy which will have its effect in the days of reconstruction which are to come.

I want to make clear the importance of this, and it can only be done by an illustration. It happened that I was once sent for by a man who is a notable figure of our time, and I spent half an hour in discussion with him, gaining an unfading impression of strength of purpose, of kindliness and of really violent sincerity. It happens that he is a man who is frequently and harshly discussed, and since that interview I have often heard people talking angrily about him, and naturally I have borne witness, speaking of the man as I found him to those who had never seen him or spoken to him. In consequence they got

a new idea of him, saw him as they had not seen him before, and began to think more kindly of him.

So with all these people who during these years have come in contact with the King, who have spoken to him, received medals from his hands, been close to him. Whatever impression they have brought away they will spread abroad as they go through life, and their testimony will be far more valuable than all the machine-made eulogies of the newspapers, for it will be held to be reliable.

What, then, is the general impression of the King? It must be admitted that the Army as a whole is under a disadvantage in this matter. It is our misfortune that we rarely see him except at reviews, and the soldier who does not hate reviews has not yet been invented. There are the days of preparation, of endless fussing and badgering of all ranks. On the day itself there is frequently a tiring march to the appointed place, followed by hours of standing waiting till one envies the fortunate people who can contrive to faint and retire to shelter and the care of the stretcher-bearers. There comes the shouting of orders, the music and the presenting of arms. A group

of figures passes hastily in the distance, and after some more waiting there is the march back to camp. . . . I can quite believe that such an affair is a valuable part of military training, but it is worse than useless as a means of making the King known to his soldiers; it is far more likely to make his soldiers wish that kings had never been invented. I have experienced one such review, and if that had been my only sight of His Majesty during the war I doubt if I should feel to-day much interest in his Person, whatever views I might hold about his Crown and Dignity. But it happened that I was in Westminster Abbey on that Sunday morning when he was present at the service for the first day of the fourth year of the war.

He came very quietly, with no great company or flaring trumpets or any pageant at all. It was just that an English naval officer was going to church with his daughter and one or two friends to say his prayers as English gentlemen have been accustomed to say their prayers. They sat there and the choir and clergy came in and went about their business in the accustomed fashion. It is true that the King and his people were sitting in a special place

prepared for them, but in no other way was there anything to distinguish them from the rest of the congregation. . . . One forgot at last to watch them as one commonly watches the chief figures in great ceremonies, because they were so plainly there with the rest of us, joined with us in the one common purpose. But one was conscious of that naval officer with the worn, kindly face, and of the wholesome English girl beside him.

Sitting there I was thinking of another day when under a grey sky a little steamer struggled through a turbulent sea on the way to Swanage and found two great grey cruisers whose guns were speaking once a minute because a king was dead. It was the morning after the death of Edward VII., and they had their part to play in the slow ritual of the occasion. There was the memory of those ships, and here in the cool calm of the tall building was an English gentleman saying his prayers; and it was the double view of kingship declaring that the man and the symbol are one, and that it is as necessary for the symbol to be a man as for the man to be a symbol. That Bank Holiday evening showed the use and value of the symbol, and that scene in the

quiet church insisted on the entirely human nature of the symbol.

It has been the trouble of our time that the human side of the monarchy has been kept from us, and we have seen the King only as the centre of pageants and not at all as a man. We had come to look upon him as a figure remote and unreal, a puppet moved by incomprehensible forces in a fantastic world, wearing unreasonable clothes and doing mildly decorative but totally unnecessary things. It is only in these years of war that the Crown has come among us, come to see us at work, come to church with us, come to see us at play. Even to-day these comings have often been spoilt by the lingering of the old traditions, the stiffness, the ludicrous language, the florid, meaningless flattery. But perhaps the remark of that friend of mine who met the Prince of Wales may stand to prove that those traditions are really giving way to a more human intercourse, that we are coming to more sensible and more kindly times.

With the coming of those times the stability of the Throne of England should be assured. We, after all, are not of the stuff of which republicans are made, and we should lose in

so many ways if at such a time as this we had no head of our State but Mr. Lloyd George. Sentiment is a great and valuable force in human life, and it is hard to see what sentiment can gather round a president, especially in so old a country as this where the ages have made so excellent a frame for great movements and pictures. We have our history, and the King in England is the token of that history, crowned beneath that roof which has watched the crownings of the long centuries, dwelling in houses made by the men whose names endure, filling a part which the process of the ages has constructed, a permanent thing standing through all changes.

To-night it will be guest night in our mess. After dinner the port will go round, and the mess president will rise with his "Mr. Vice, the King!" There will be the sudden movement of the chairs as all we various people, with all our conflicting ideas and our occasional lack of ideas on the subject of kingship and the governance of nations, rise in our places and, standing, hear the answer of the subaltern of the day, "Gentlemen, the King!" Instantly there will be the band playing that tune to which those rather ludicrous words

are set, while we stand erect in silence, glasses ready. And that man must be very dull or very obstinate who does not find that one of the keen-edged moments of life, who is not conscious of standing in the presence of the centuries and of taking part in an excellent ritual appointed to declare our unity with the past and our determination that we, God helping us, will not be less than our fathers.

CHAPTER IV

KEEPERS OF TO-MORROW

HAMMERSMITH
PUBLIC LIBRARIES

1. THAT WE ARE NOT AFRAID

THERE are people in England to-day who appear to dread the coming of peace. They are not, as one might imagine, those fat and prosperous persons who are making fortunes out of the war and object to the idea that presently their profits must come to an end. Doubtless those people have their own apprehensions, but they are few in number and despicable in quality. But there are very many worthy and sober-minded citizens who can see no hope for the future, who see only the threat of endless complexities, intolerable problems and hideous difficulties which, in their view, will darken and make terrible the dawn of peace. From time to time their fears are publicly announced. One declares that the women who have taken over the work of the men who have gone to the front will never be content to give that work up when the war is over. Another insists on the certainty of a bitter and terrible strife

between classes when peace returns, and the third is convinced that our victory will be followed by so terrible a wave of poverty that our people will be brought to starvation and our country to ruin. You can hardly open a paper without coming across some word from these prophets of disaster. They do not say what in their opinion would be the evil fruits of our defeat, but they do not seem ashamed to declare that by victory we shall perish.

Really it is not wonderful that we are a puzzle to the rest of the world. Read history as you will and discover if you can any other nation which ever sought to encourage its soldiers by promising them starvation when they should have returned in triumph. Go where you will in the world of to-day and find if you can a country where people are allowed to suggest that victory will be fatal. Yet these things are done in England to-day, and it does not appear that any one is shot for doing them. The folly of men may be surprising at times, but after all it is their wisdom which fills one with the major amazement.

It is fortunate that the Army as a whole refuses to take these wise people seriously.

It is aware of them, of course, for, as I have said, their prophecies are in all the papers, and no one reads the papers so intently as the soldier on active service. He sees all these dismal forecasts and it might be feared that they would depress him. If he believed them; it is certain that they would turn his life into an intolerable torment by robbing it of all that hope for the future which alone enables him to endure his present perilous toil. But he simply laughs at them. "Going to be smashed up, are we?" he asks. "Just wait till we have got this job fixed up and then we'll see all about that." And he returns to the task of the moment; and he does not consider it necessary to deny himself those dreams of happy years to come which, dwelling in his secret heart; are a light in the darkness of the present. For he believes that all shall yet be well, and he refuses to believe that all this labour and suffering can end only in misery.

It is admitted, of course, that the soldier is something of a fatalist. You cannot expect a man who is hourly in peril to take the future too seriously. You cannot expect him to sit down and worry himself over the problems of to-morrow when it is entirely possible that

he may not live until to-night. He has the present to get through. If he survives his present tour of duty in the trenches he will have a jolly time behind the lines for a bit, and there is always leave to look forward to. He has faith in the future and hope for the future, but you can scarcely expect him to busy himself with planning for the future on any exact and definite lines. He laughs at the dismal prophets, and we may give thanks that he does laugh at them; but it is not because he is able to prove with fact, deduction and inference that they are wrong. He is not able to prove anything, nor does he attempt to do so—he is quite content to laugh. For there is in his heart something better than knowledge; there is a conviction that there does remain rest to come at the end of toil, that the harbour is appointed beyond the edge of the perilous seas.

And if you reply that this conviction, this faith, is a very inadequate outfit with which to tackle problems which will require the most skilful constructive statesmanship for their solution, I can only answer that it is proving adequate every day to the solution of more difficult problems than these on every front,

in every prison camp in Germany, wherever our men have before them the choice of serving to the limit of endurance or of doing just so much as shall secure them from detection. This faith, this evidence of things not seen—this it is which stands between you at home and the fate of Flanders, and has stood ever since the enemy turned and went back from the Marne four years ago. And if you say to these men that they shall surely return to unemployment, to starvation, to the merciless shelter of the workhouse, they will laugh at you, and they have earned the right to laugh at you.

And they will laugh in spite of the fact that very many of them have the most acute problems of their own to face when peace returns. There are some, of course, who know that they will be able to step back into the posts which they held before the war, but even those more fortunate people have their difficulties. It is no small matter to take a man away from any work for which a moderate amount of skill is required and to keep him at a different occupation for four years and then to send him back. They are asking themselves how they will get on at the

old job, wondering how much they will remember when the time comes, and how much will be new to them. And many are wondering how they will be able to face work in office, shop or factory after the open air to which they have been accustomed for so long.

And these are fortunate. There are others who are in an infinitely worse position. There are the men who gave up their work with no guarantee that they should be taken back again; there are the men who gave up their businesses and must, if they are to start again, begin at the bottom of the ladder; and there are the men who had just finished a long course of training for some occupation, who in these years have forgotten all that they knew, and will in the end find themselves at a disadvantage compared with boys who have just left school. The personal problems of the Army are almost as numerous as the soldiers themselves, and the man who is confident of resuming his civil occupation without loss of skill or opportunity is the exception. And yet the Army refuses to be afraid of the future, and insists on laughing at those who can see nothing but disaster ahead of us.

Nor does that laughter seem in any way unreasonable to those of us who have watched these years from within the Army itself. Probably there are some few people who are in a position to realise the whole of what has been done in England since the war began, but they must be very few. Most of us can only know of that part of the work and of the change which has come under our personal observation, and in the Army we have seen more of it than could be seen by any who stayed at home. It is true that much has been written and printed about our national effort, but the thing of which one reads is not so impressive as the thing which one actually sees. One reads of thousands of big guns being turned out of our factories, but the figures are almost meaningless till on a day one sees a long grey monster going down to the sea supported on three railway trucks—just one out of all those thousands.

In the Army we have seen so many and so many sorts of things. We have seen, for instance, such matters as that abrupt suspension of the normal rights of landowners of which I wrote in another chapter. We have seen liberties abridged and traditions tossed on one

side. We have seen the passing in a day of things which had seemed immutable and the most ruthless operation of the law of necessity. We have learnt that in the hour of need nothing can stand merely because it is standing, and that all things which are to be tolerated must prove their value. We are aware that no building or boundary, no law or precedent, no office or system can remain once its worthlessness is made plain. And we are determined that that which we have seen to be the law of war shall also if needs must be the law of peace; that if returning we find in our England things which stand in the way of a full and happy life, we shall not hesitate to pull them down and to build anew on the old ground.

We have seen, too, what can be done in the way of handling material things, of production and distribution. The Englishman who stays at home is vaguely conscious that this is a very large war, but we and our friends have walked round the circumference of it. We have known how the boats come up the Tigris, how the pack-mules go in the hills of Macedonia, and how the trains toil along the ways of France. We have seen the docks and the

dumps and the great piles of stores of every description. We have watched the giant guns, and we have seen all the traffic of the sea and the air, and we know something of what those things are which have been made and brought from the ends of the earth for the service of war.

We have seen, that is to say, that, given the necessity, material obstacles can be overcome. We know better than any ordinary civilian can know that England has been turned into a huge workshop for the making of the instruments of war, and we are not unnaturally inclined to think that she can similarly be turned into a workshop for making the instruments of peace. If we can organise so sweepingly and successfully for war, shall we not be able to organise with equal success for peace ?

Before the war we were given to understand that various things were impossible. There was, for instance, that abject confession of national failure contained in the word unemployable. We were told, and we accepted the statement as true, that a proportion of our population were unemployable. Those derelicts remained a constant menace to the

seemliness of life, pitiful in themselves, terrible in their implication. Just above them and merged with them there was the mass of casual labour swinging between employment and unemployment, and we were told that these things must be. There must be the reserve of labour at hand to be drawn upon as required; and that statement also we accepted.

We are not in the mood to accept such statements any more. There is the War Cabinet Report for 1917 to state that "even those usually classed as 'unemployable' are now usefully employed," and it will be quite useless for any politician of the future to get up and say that certain people are not employed because they are unemployable. That is one of the tales which we have heard for the last time, neither shall we listen at all patiently in the future to any one who tells us that it is necessary for some men to work overtime while others are not employed at all, and any employer who sets to work to explain the need for a reserve of labour in the old sense of the word will find himself in an unpleasant position. If by the reserve of labour he means that a percentage of the population must

spend a portion of the year without work or pay in order that he may draw upon it when there comes a boom in his business, he will simply be told to get some new ideas, and to get them very quickly. And if our rulers protest that he is quite right, and that no other plan is possible, we shall just turn them out and get some new rulers. For we have learnt that nothing which is necessary is impossible.

. . . . . .

So it is that the soldier regards the future without fear. He knows quite well that there will be difficulties, and if he ignored everything else he would still have the problem of his own future to remind him that life is not going to be at all a simple matter after the war. But he believes, and surely not without reason, that the brains which solved the far greater problems of war will be able also to solve the problems of peace. He has come to the conclusion that they might have been solved in the old days if only sufficient people had cared enough about them to insist that a solution was necessary. That was the trouble in the past. We were acquiescent. We believed the people who talked about impossibility, and we did not realise the power

of necessity. Indeed, by our inaction we agreed that it was necessary that men and women and little children should be cold and hungry, and for our only hope we looked beyond the seas to some other, happier land.

But we have found our England, and we are not to be divorced from her. This land which we have served is ours by the right of service, and we refuse to be treated any longer as strangers and outcasts in our own place. Walking in the middle of the shadow of death we have looked at England, and we have desired her, and we will not be denied. If any seek to stand in our way they must be put aside; for we have served as they have not served, and we are coming home. And if there is not room for us all in England, then they shall go and we will stay.

And we will not stay as we stayed in the past, with the shadow of fear over our lives and the threat of the punishment of the workhouse for all who were not prosperous. It is time that some new name and new use was found for those workhouses, and more than time that many of them were pulled down altogether. They stood for a symbol of an age which is dead; and if the people at home

do not realise how exceedingly dead it is, we, when we return, will make that plain to them.

I know nothing of parties and policies. This soldiering business has kept me busy for so long that I have not the least idea what the principles of any particular party may be. I only know that there is coming into existence a demand for a party which shall make "England for the English" the head of its demand, and if any of the existing parties can fit that in with its own scheme of things it will find itself in a singularly happy position. In the old days I suppose we were Conservative or Liberal or Labour, according to the circumstances of our life and the trend of our minds, but to-day we are merely English. We are convinced, that is, that since it has been so generously conceded that we all have a right to die for England, it can scarcely be denied that we have a right to live in England, and to live in the fullest sense of the word.

Recently I was dealing with large quantities of printed postcards, getting the blank spaces filled in by the men of my company. Those postcards were sent off to the Registration Offices of the different electoral areas in England, and the same thing was going on at

the same time in all the camps in this country and in all places where our armies are to be found beyond the sea. It was the working of that machinery which is to secure to every soldier his vote; it was the placing of power in the hands of our serving millions. There is also that matter of the woman's vote. There will be very few of the women who go to the polling stations in future who will not have had a keen interest in some two or three men in the Army, and it is certain that many of them will be living maimed and empty lives because some soldier who went out did not return. Where do you suppose those women will be found when the issue is raised and it becomes a question whether or not the English shall be free in England?

So we are not afraid. Just now we are very busy and we have no time to deal with the gloomy people who talk of the starvation which is to be our only reward, or with those other kind souls who are getting out emigration schemes that we may be the more rapidly and effectually hustled out of the country when the present need of our services is at an end. But all that will come at a good hour, as we have learned to say. And if there be

things in England which must be pulled down to make room for us to live, things which the timid people at home are afraid to touch, still there need be no fear. For we have learnt a certain desperate courage in these years, and we are not alarmed by any appearance of strength. If you cannot clear away these obstructive things before we return, then we will deal with them when we come, and make for ourselves and for you a better, happier world than we have known.

HAMMERSMITH
PUBLIC LIBRARIES

2. HEDGES AND MOTOR-PLOUGHS

THERE was a time when the mechanism of the war moved me to Malta and left me in that curious, happy little island for some weeks. I was able to see a great deal of it, and to realise how thoroughly man can conquer nature if it seems to him that the conquest is desirable, if it is worth while. There is the island formed of the most obdurate rock. As you come up from the sea it lies a golden bar across the way, with only the rarest touches of green. You enter the craggy harbour of Valetta, and after a while you are off out of the town careering up and down the maddest hills on roads which have the most impossible curves and a general habit of running at the edge of the local precipice. It is stone everywhere. All the walls and houses and astonishing churches are built of the same pale golden rock as that which gleams at the edge of every one of the innumerable terraces by

which the hills ascend. But on every terrace there are little fertile fields growing every imaginable crop, tended with the most minute care so that there is never a weed to be seen, and you are haunted with the idea that the Maltese farmer would be worried to death if a solitary grain of earth was not doing its appointed work.

Later you learn how, Malta having little or no earth of its own, the earth was brought in ships from Sicily, dragged up the hills and spread on the terraces to form these little farms. You learn, too, how by watchful care and skill the earth is made to produce three and even four crops in the year, and how scarcely a day is wasted between the reaping of one crop and the sowing of the next. You begin to realise how it is that Malta ranks as one of the most fertile islands in the world, and possibly you begin to think of England. . . . Here is an extract from the Report of the War Cabinet for 1917 :

> Case after case was reported of considerable areas of land which, having at one time produced good crops, are either entirely given up to sport, allowed to become derelict, or farmed in the most

> careless and negligent manner. Many of the worst cases are those of occupying owners who do not depend on the production of the land for their livelihood. . . . In some parts of the country there are large areas which formerly supported a considerable population, where the houses and buildings have been allowed to fall into ruin and the land has been used merely as extensive sheep or cattle ranches.

That is what was being done to our England while we were meekly listening to lectures on the unemployable and the reserve of labour. We did not know. We were huddled in the great, aching towns and we did not know. If at times we longed for the land and for the service of the land, there were all sorts of eager people waiting to point to us the way to Canada, Australia, South Africa, to any part of this wide earth but England. There were no little pamphlets with maps and lists of railway fares and particulars as to the cost of living to show us how to get to England and how to live there when we had arrived. Instead, there were incessant warnings, and all that we heard about England was that it

was overcrowded. . . . There are times when I think that those dear acres of ours, returning now to the seemliness of service, must be thanking God for this war as they feel the corn quicken to life in their furrows.

Of course I know the arguments. It was said in the bad old days that farmers could not afford to grow corn in England, and the way was immediately open for some violent remarks about Free Trade in the course of which England was conveniently forgotten. Year by year the process continued. If you had known any space of country thirty years ago and returned to it at intervals, you found the increasing triumph of the grass and the emptying of the villages. The farmers blamed their own poverty for their failure to pay a living wage to their workers, and when they had driven the labourers into the towns, explained that they had no hands to work for them and let some more land go out of cultivation. The land was given to the pheasant and the partridge and the hare, and the cottages became week-end resorts of rich people from the towns, and the English streamed westward through Liverpool.

The evil that followed from this was almost

illimitable in extent and variety, but its main aspects are two : at an hour when we needed the food those acres might have produced, the farmers could only show us a few flocks of sheep, and when we were looking for men for our armies we could only take them from the towns. I am not saying a word against the townsmen as soldiers. They have proved, and they are proving every day, that they possess unconquerable cheerfulness and a flaming courage, but they had not and could not have the stamina, the lungs and the muscles of the men from the countryside. And we might have had the men from the countryside and the abundant harvest of our acres if we had not been robbed of England.

. . . . . .

Those times are dead, and already we have some security that they will not return. There is the fact that even when the war is over it will be some time before the world gets back to normal conditions. For some time to come we shall have to depend very largely on ourselves for our food supply, and that fact is sufficiently indicated by the fixed minimum prices for corn which are to remain in force for a period of five years. But there

is another matter which has been very generally overlooked. For a very long time our farmers have been faced by unfair competition. In all the new countries men have been growing wheat on virgin soil which required no fertilising. As one belt of country was worked out and began to need the care and attention which must be given to old land, so they moved to areas yet untouched, and grew their corn at far less cost than they would have had to face if they had been working on old land. So much less was the cost that they could afford to send their corn to England and then undersell the English farmer. But there is a limit to the amount of virgin soil in the world, and that limit had been very nearly reached when war broke out. It will not be possible in future for the corn-producer overseas to compete with the English producer on such favourable terms as he enjoyed before the war.

In future he too will have fertilisers to buy, and he will have to employ more careful and more expensive methods of cultivation. Before his corn is ready to be shipped it will have cost him far more than it did in the old days, and something like equality will be attained without bringing in the question of a tariff

at all. Whatever may happen in the future we have that fact to guarantee, that in the future it will be more permanently profitable to grow corn in England than it has been in the past.

That fact is likely to attract the attention of business men, and indeed there are signs that farming is now being seriously considered by people who had never thought of it before as a means of making money. I have already heard schemes discussed which suggest the possibility of very curious and striking developments in the course of the next few years. The idea seems to be that limited liability companies, financed in the usual way, shall acquire a number of farms as near together as possible, or preferably large homogeneous estates, the larger (having respect to the available capital) the better. Each farm, I take it, would be in charge of a manager who would be an expert farmer and would carry on the work very much as it is done to-day, but at the centre of the circle of farms there would be a headquarters having available all the necessary plant, motor tractors, threshing machines, a fully equipped dairy, possibly an abattoir, and stores for the housing of all

kinds of produce. This place would have, of course, its own railway siding, and would be in a position to send off all perishable stuff immediately. Thus farming would be changed from the lone and desperate adventure it has too often been in the past, into a definite organised business.

And there is only one disadvantage that I can see in such a plan—a corporation, as it has been said, has no soul to be saved or body to be kicked. Farming, after all, is an intimate, personal kind of trade. The man has to know his acres, to know how to humour them, to know which he may bully and with which he must walk delicately. The longer he spends with his land—so that he keeps an open ear and a mind ready to give modern improvements their due—the better results will he obtain from it. You cannot profitably pick him up and dump him down in a distant county and say, "Here is a farm; get on with it." It will be two or three years before he has learnt the way of his land, and in the meantime his results will come short of what they might be. Moreover, the farmer must take long views and think not in months but in cycles of years, and it is doubtful if the directors

of a company would have enough patience or understanding. They might very easily allow their farming to degenerate into a mere scramble for immediate profit, which would impoverish the land and reduce their expert managers to impotent fury.

There is, further, the danger that these wholesale farmers might be inclined to do things on too spacious a scale. Since motor-tractors came to this country we have been hearing a great deal about the mighty fields of Canada where the ploughs can run for mile after mile across the unfenced plain. It has been pointed out that our hedges are very wasteful, occupying themselves a great deal of ground and causing endless turnings of the plough, with a consequent loss of full cultivation at either end of the field. All this is so true that no one would dream of denying it, and its very truth might lead our new farmers to condemn hedges altogether and to sweep them off their land.

Quite apart from all questions of sentiment—and no one who has loved the English countryside can think without pain of the passing of the English hedge—it is not altogether certain that such a plan would answer in England.

Geologically this is rather a mad country, and there are the most surprising changes in the character of the soil within comparatively small areas. The division of our fields is not wholly arbitrary, and it does very often reflect divergence of character. To ignore that would be bad farming, and it would lead to poor results. It is probably true that many of our hedges could be removed with advantage; the land could be brought more fully under cultivation, with economy of labour. But it is a thing that would need to be done very cautiously and with all consideration paid to the nature of the soil.

With these reservations it has to be admitted that this organised, large-scale farming would be a vast improvement on anything that we have known hitherto, and if it had come into existence ten years ago there would not have been so much leeway to make up when the German began to send our foodships to the bottom. The place which would be taken by the headquarters might very well have been taken in the past by the owners of our great estates, but with very few exceptions they failed disastrously; they did not realise either their opportunities or their responsi-

bilities. So long as their tenants paid the rent there were few of them who cared how the farming was carried on, and fewer still who realised how they might help their tenants by the provision of the more expensive plant and of centres for the collection and distribution of produce.

They failed and their tenants failed, and it really does appear that now that the English are to return to England it will have to be in some other way than any we have known hitherto. Of course the solution might be found—and doubtless to some extent it will be found—on lines similar to those which have made the Irish Agricultural Organisation Society the splendid success that it is, but it will be very strange if this really brilliant opportunity is missed by English business men who are not usually slow to see and to make the most of a good chance.

But I am not so much concerned with the people who have money to invest as with the people who have lives to invest, and any soldier who is considering the future of agriculture in England must by every instinct and interest be driven at last to the thought of the men and women who will do the work of the farms,

going out to make their homes in England. And it is just here that care and watchfulness will be needed lest farming become mere exploitation of the land and of the people who live on and by the land. We who have been held for so long from our own country have no idea of returning to it as the mere paid servants of some man or some company. Our desire is for some broader privilege, for some securely founded right. That will not be attained unless the way is opened for those who work on the land to have access to the land themselves. It must be possible for them to obtain land if that is their desire, and to have it in possession and to enjoy the fruits of their own labour.

There is no inherent difficulty in this. There is no reason at all why the man who works on a farm should have to work so many hours that at the end of the day he is capable of nothing but sitting for an hour in the tap-room of a public-house before going to his rest. Indeed, it is all to the interests of the nation that the hours should be as short as possible, so that all the more people can be employed on the land. With shorter hours there will be the more opportunity for the

man to attend to his own land, and since whatever he makes will be entirely his own, it will give him a certain independence of his employers.

Probably the employers will not altogether appreciate that, and certainly they will not if they belong to the old school of farmers, who have been accustomed through the years to an almost absolute power over their labourers, but the employers have been considered for too long, and they have made too disastrous a mess of the business for them to have much claim on our consideration to-day. The men we have to think about are those who to-day are fighting our battles and dreaming of this England which they have found. They have earned something better than those old conditions when a farmer could turn his men out of their jobs and out of their cottages because they insisted on going to the Wesleyan chapel instead of to church. They have earned the right to a share of the soil of England, if that shall be their desire.

They have earned it, and I cannot doubt that they will take it if it is not freely granted in advance. We who have moved to and fro in England have seen things of which we

had not dreamed, and there is many a man who had left the country for the town who is longing for a change to go back to the country. The chance will be there, for as more and more of the land comes under cultivation so will more and more men be required for its service. The demand will be even more insistent after the war than it is to-day, for with the withdrawal of the various Employment Companies and of the Women's Land Army the farmers will be compelled to seek for men and to make their conditions more and more attractive. One can foresee a mighty rebuilding of our villages, and the coming of a state of things which would have seemed the echo of a dream four years ago.

For it is certain that the farmers will not be allowed to slip back into their old ways. They betrayed us once, but they will not be permitted to betray us again. If self-interest will not lead them to make the most of their land, there are other forces that can be set to work, and in the last resort they can be quite abruptly bundled out to make room for men who will realise that land is a sacred thing to be held in trust for the whole nation, and so to be served that all the nation shall be

served. England was made not to be the playground of the few, but the home of the multitude of the English. Our hills and valleys have the right to some better fate than to be deserted for nine months that in the other three a handful of people may shoot birds. Our rich lands have in them the stuff for the forming of the bodies of men and women, and it is not seemly that they should be barren and desolate. Nor shall they ever be again, for we are coming home!

HAMMERSMITH
PUBLIC LIBRARIES

3. A HIGHWAY SHALL BE THERE

IF there is one lesson which the soldier learns more thoroughly than another it is that transport is the key to almost all the problems of war. Success in battle depends on having your men in the right place at the right time. If your transport breaks down and they are stranded a dozen miles away, you will be defeated. And if, having them in the right place, you cannot supply them with food, ammunition, and whatever else they may require, they will be worse than useless, for you will lose them and your defeat will be more terrible than ever. Victory depends as much on your skill in moving men and supplies about as it does on the valour of your fighting troops. This is the teaching of war, and the soldier returning will not forget it, but will carry the memory with him into all the ways of peace.

Suppose we succeed in that business of

redeeming England and setting our acres to their proper business and occupation. Suppose with big farms and small holdings and allotments we return our land to fertility and begin to raise crops on a scale more nearly adequate to our needs than anything we have known—all that will be wasted unless we can carry it to the places where it is required, at the time when it is required. That has been demonstrated again and again in the past. In the West of England fruit has fallen to lie rotting on the ground because it was worth no one's while to pick it, pack it and send it away. And at the same time in London and the great towns of the North there have been hundreds of thousands to whom that fruit would have been most pleasant and valuable. But between the fruit on the ground and the people who desired it so hopelessly there ran the miles of our wonderful railways with their unimaginative freight charges, so the fruit was destroyed and the people went without it.

That is just one instance of the way we mismanaged things till necessity came to open our eyes and enlighten our understanding. We might, and no doubt we should,

have grown far more food in England if it had not been that market-garden produce was carried to London more cheaply from the north of France than from Kent. It was almost intolerably difficult for the English producer of perishable fruit to get his stuff to market, and he had to suffer the vexation of seeing the trains go rolling by with similar produce from beyond the sea. The organisation of distribution never entered the official mind till it became necessary to ransack the land for potatoes and bring them with all speed to those places which had need of them.

Some of us dreamed dreams in those days which are on the way to coming true now, but no kind of action was taken. The slow waggons still rumbled up to Covent Garden through the night from the immediate neighbourhood of London, the trains still carried the produce of France and the Channel Islands past the empty English acres; and those who, greatly daring, sought to grow perishable food beyond the waggon-radius, found that their only market was in their immediate neighbourhood. Considering the England of 1914 one could almost forgive a German for arguing that God must intend

to destroy us, since He had certainly and obviously made us mad.

It is nearly a quarter of a century since the internal combustion engine made its appearance in public, but it has needed this war to drive into our heads the fact of its tremendous usefulness in the transport of goods. I remember standing in Ludgate Circus one day six years ago and watching the two streams of traffic, north and south and east and west. The north and south traffic from and to Farringdon Street was nearly all goods transport, and almost without exception it was horse-drawn; that which ran east and west between Fleet Street and Ludgate Hill was mainly the transport of passengers, and almost without exception it was carried out by motors. So in the Army at the beginning there were beautiful swift motor-cars for the generals, but the food and the shells must journey behind horses, till in the hour of desperate need some one realised that the petrol which moved generals about so quickly could also be used to hurry ammunition towards the firing line, and that which had been the plaything of the rich became the servant of rich and poor alike as they stood

side by side in the trenches beating back the forces of the enemy. To-day the great motor-lorries of the Army are a commonplace of the roads, and we are all so accustomed to the sight of them that we are in some danger of forgetting that they are practically an invention of the war. Of course I know that motor-lorries were made and used before the war, but it was on a most limited scale, and practically the whole of the heavier traffic was horse-drawn, while the tradesman who invested in a motor delivery van was very generally considered to have secured for himself an early and unhappy appearance in the Bankruptcy Court. So short was the supply of motor-lorries at the beginning that, as it may be remembered, London omnibuses were taken to France in large numbers, and for a time they were put to every imaginable use. Now there are the lorries in tens of thousands, and when one is thinking of the England that shall be, the mind instinctively turns to them.

Transport is almost as important a key to the problems of peace as it is to the problems of war. As things are to-day we can grow food almost anywhere, but we can eat it in large quantities in a few places only—that is, in the

great towns. To keep the towns supplied is the chief of the problems from one point of view, and it is one with the problem of finding a profitable market for those who work in the far districts. I cannot think of anything which would more effectually solve that problem than those big grey lorries.

All that is wanted is a little imagination and some organising ability—of which last there is certainly no lack in this country. In each village there would be a collecting centre to which the people would send whatever they had to sell—milk, garden stuff, poultry, eggs, anything at all. At appointed times during the day there would be the lorry calling to collect their goods and hurry them off to a larger centre, which might be anything up to twenty miles away. At this centre the produce of all the country in the twenty-mile radius around would pass quickly through a clearing-house on to the waiting train and sent off without delay to the nearest large centre of population which required it. A system of fast night goods trains would make it possible for any kind of produce to be on sale in any big town the morning after the day it was procured a hundred miles away. The

stopping-places need be very few, and the trucks would be loaded and waiting to be attached to the train when it arrived. And, of course, in places where the trains did not serve, the whole journey from the clearing-houses could be made by motor lorry, which would be an advantage to this extent, that the lorries could be unloaded at the markets themselves instead of at a station.

I do not pretend to know what the cost of such a scheme would be, but I do know that at the end of the war this nation is going to be in possession of a very considerable fleet of lorries, and it is hard to see what is to be done with them when there are no more shells and rations to be carried along the roads of France. They might, of course, be sold at ridiculously low prices to people in need of such things, but they would be much better employed if they remained in the public service and were devoted to this task of bringing the producer and the consumer together. There would be no need to run them at more than the slightest margin of profit, and it is reasonable to suppose that the traffic could bear the cost of that without difficulty. Doubtless the railways would object (unless they are nationalised),

but the railways have treated England so badly that no one would pay much attention to their complaints.

In considering this new England of ours the roads are seen more and more to be the important feature. Years ago one began to suspect that the railways must pass, because they lack one intensely important thing—elasticity. The railway is the Mahomet to whom the mountain must be brought. All the goods which it carries must first be carted to selected collecting points, and for the faster traffic—which is the only kind of any use for perishable matters—these points are necessarily far apart. The stuff must be handled and re-handled as it is placed on the train and unloaded at the station, so that both time and labour are wasted.

But the road goes everywhere, and the motor can go along all the roads. It can if necessary collect goods at their point of origin and carry them all the way to their destination, saving two handlings. A motor convoy can be as large or as small as necessary, and individual lorries can make the journey alone without waiting in sidings to be picked up with an endless fuss of coupling and un-

coupling. If you want to get the night mail from London to Holyhead the railway is a useful servant, but if you want to get a truck-load of cabbages from Kent to Covent Garden it is merely exasperating, if your cabbages are five miles from any station and ten from the nearest town. But the motors could come and take them in the evening, and London would be happily eating them by the following midday. For certain kinds of traffic the railways will probably retain their usefulness for some time to come, but for fast light freights which have to be collected over considerable areas the motor is infinitely preferable. It is not too much to say that the railways locked the doors of England, and motors shall open them again.

And that in more ways than one. In an earlier chapter I was dealing with the question of dwelling in the ugly places where the work is done. It is quite certain that those places must be and remain ugly. There is nothing that you can do to make a colliery district a pretty, happy sight; and though a blast furnace by night is very wonderful to look at, there is nothing enchanting about it by day. But though these places must remain grimy

and grim, there is no reason why men and women and children should live in them. Once more it is purely a matter of transport, and here again the roads can do what the railways have failed to do.

The suburban service of most of our railways is one of the most scandalous things about them. It is as if the directors were paying the most grudging tribute to necessity. "Here," they seem to say, "are all these people who will insist on travelling on our line every morning and evening for poky little distances of five, seven and ten miles. We will punish them. We will give them the worst carriages we can find, and we will take care that there are not enough carriages, and they shall be dragged along as slowly and uncomfortably as possible." Whether or not they really feel like that I cannot say, but that is certainly how they behave. In consequence, to live in a suburb is so unhappy a fate that "suburban" has come to be a term of contempt, as though none but very poor-spirited people would put up with such conditions.

I for one will not be living in a suburb when I return to be at home in England. It

will, I imagine, be my fate to work in London, but I will have nothing to do with Balham or Norwood or Herne Hill or Hornsey. I have been very hungry for England for a long time, and I will dwell in her loveliness, that my heart may praise her every day. It is my dream and desire to be away from any town or great collection of houses, in some quiet place, fifteen or twenty miles away from London, and it may very well be that the place I shall choose will be far from any railway.

If I have only the railway to depend on, the door of England is locked against me. There is the place of my dreams, the little house which I found after long searching and knew at once for my home. It stands in its quiet garden on the edge of the wood, with the windows looking down the long valley to the west,—a place of joy for children, of rest for the weary, so fine a frame for happiness, so sure a solace in heaviness. But it is four miles from a station where trains call at hours inconvenient to me, and if in those days to come the railway is my only servant, how am I to reach this my England which I have loved ?

The motor is the only possible key with which that door can be unlocked. Already

we have the gaily adventurous motor-bus rolling down to Dorking and north to Watford and St. Albans. The motor-bus of to-day is rather lovable in many ways, but it is not possible to regard it as the last word in carriage construction. It is uncomfortable, its springs are negligible, and it is far too slow. But it is permitted to one to hope and believe that after the omnibus of to-day there comes some better thing. Our inventors, who can construct such clever machines for the service of war, should not be unable to make some equally clever machines for the service of peace. I cannot see why we should not have within the next few years a new kind of omnibus, comfortable and swift, probably carrying more passengers than the present type, running twenty or thirty miles out from all our big towns.

There will be, of course, a change in our roads. We have been gradually escaping from the influence of the late Mr. Macadam, and before the war the road surfaces in many places were improving rapidly, if rather experimentally. After the war there will be such an increase in motor traffic that the authorities will be compelled as a measure of sheer self-defence to adopt some surface that will stand

the strain of it. Indeed it seems very desirable that the roads of the country should be placed under one central authority instead of under a host of little authorities. The little authorities were adequate, no doubt, when it was unusual for any one to travel more than a dozen miles and when very few used the roads at all, but the change was upon us before the war, and in the years to come very many people are going to move to and fro over much greater distances. The roads will be used as they have never yet been used, and there will be a need for a standard of breadth and surface, with a proper and uniform system for crossings, and most certainly the abolition of the speed limit and such man-catching ingenuities as made the Surrey County Council infamous in the old days. So long as the fast traffic and the slow are kept apart there does not seem any reason for imposing any speed limit at all.

These things will not come in a day, but they will most surely come. We, the people of England, will see to that, and particularly those of us who have been in exile. We have been penned in the towns for too long, and the towns are not good for us or for our children, and we will not endure the locking of those

doors any more. More and more the dwellings of the people will drift away from those areas which are stained and loud with toil; more and more shall we insist on living in those good places which our life in the Army has shown to us, which have inhabited all our dreams of England. We will go out into England, and the good things which England has to give shall come to us along the same roads. We shall not be bound any longer by those steel ways on which the trains run so furiously, racing past all that is best in England to stop, as a rule, at the ugliest places, but the roads shall be, as they were in the days before railways were invented, the way to our country.

And they shall be for the wayfaring men, for you and me and all the rest of us who are just ordinary people. There was the time when it seemed that they were to be taken away from us and handed over to those who had great possessions. In those days the man who could only afford a bicycle went uneasily among the big, expensive motors, but in the days that are coming our motors will be on the roads too, and there will be the passing of that envy which made those who could not afford them hate the sight of the

huge, swift cars. There will be a place for the bicycles too, when we have appointed one road for the fast and one for the slow traffic, and the English will be free at last to occupy England.

4. THE POSSESSION OF ENGLAND

TO whom does this England belong? If you had asked that question in the time before the years of revelation you would have been told, I suppose, that it belonged to the landowners. By purchase or by inheritance a limited number of people had obtained certain rights over nearly the whole of the country. Those rights were extensive and definite, they were protected by law, and they received the assent of the greater part of the population. It may have been a grudging assent, but even those of us who objected most violently to being shut out of the excellent places were unable to commit trespass without a certain feeling of guilt. We felt that it was very wrong of us, and we were uneasy in the presence of gamekeepers, wood-reeves, forest wardens, and the other ministers of the rights of property. The landowners had the right to keep us off their land, to put up brutal

fences and high glass-crowned walls, and to scare us away with fierce dogs and fiercer men. It is true that the law of trespass is curiously framed, but it had power, and the power was used. Moreover, nothing short of an Act of Parliament could compel a landowner to part with his land, however urgently it might be required or however important the purpose for which it was needed. There was erected the tradition of inviolability about the land, and we were only permitted to look at it from the public ways. Then, as I have explained, the vast necessities of war came and worked upon that tradition so that it fell, and the astonished landowners found that they were not permitted to keep their land to themselves if the Army had need of it. Some of them have not yet recovered from that amazement; they are still protesting, still mourning for the old ways and times, and promising to build higher their walls after the war.

But there is another way in which their rights have been sharply limited. Where they have not been compelled to yield their land for camps, they have been compelled to yield it to the plough. There was the time

when they were at liberty to do what they liked with it, and to cultivate it or not as they inclined. But England had need of her acres and reached out a hand to take them, and it was seen that the mighty landowner of our imagining was only a little gesticulating figure after all, that his rights were but the shadow of a dream, and that effectually England even now belongs to the English. That is the great discovery of these years, and that is the point from which we shall never go back. The owners of the earth may rise up and the rulers take counsel together, but in the last resort this land is ours, and those who claim to possess it can do so only on our conditions.

I am not suggesting that the logical outcome of these years of war is land nationalisation. I do not believe it is. This is no place for a resurrection of the arguments which used to fill the papers, and I do not feel in the least inclined to begin to write about expropriation or anything of the sort. Those arguments and those theories were based on a condition of affairs which has passed. There was the talk of nationalisation simply because everybody was so firmly convinced of the existence of the rights of landowners. But to talk of

nationalisation to-day is simply to reveal a complete and touching ignorance of all that has happened since August 1914, to reveal, indeed, a faith in the rights of property as complete as that of those landowners who look for the return of the old order.

We see in these days that England belongs to the English. That does not mean that because we are English you and I are free to stray at will over any piece of England, or to build a house on any bit of land which pleases us. This possession is not of the stuff of which anarchy is made; it is indeed the imposing of order upon disorder, and the establishment of principle in the place of chaos. It is by no means an invitation to a general struggle for favourite spots, or a prelude to the setting up of an even more insane system of ownership than that which existed before the war. It is a broader thing than that. Putting it very briefly it is the setting up of this principle, that England is to be used for the benefit of all the English people.

We came to the days of obvious necessity. There had been necessities before but we had not perceived them, so we did not trouble

about them. We did not see in the casualty lists the names of the children who died in infancy. The people who were wounded by the wretched conditions of their living did not walk about the streets in hospital blue, and an outbreak of typhoid in the East End of London did not make anything like so much noise as an air raid. The evacuation of England was so slow and silent a business that we did not perceive it. We thought it was all to the good that most of our supplies should come from beyond the seas, because they seemed to come so cheaply, and we did not dream that in reality we were paying a very heavy price for them. The national welfare demanded strong, healthy lives, and we did not realise that we were not getting them; and the cost of our defeat was not brought home to us, nor were we conscious that any peril lay before us.

But the necessities of war were immediately plain to all eyes. There was the evident need for trained men for the trenches, and there was the need for food for the whole of the nation. The English were in danger, and the people who owned the land stood between us and safety as, indeed, they had been standing for a very long time. In this case the way

to safety was as plain as the danger, and there was not so much as an hour's hesitation. No one stopped to ask whether or not the landowners would like it, nor, I imagine, did any one go back to ask the lawyers whether the proposed action was strictly constitutional. The people were in peril, and there was the land which could save the people. The orders were issued and the camps were made and the ploughs set in motion, so that once again after many years England was serving the English.

Henceforward, then, there is this principle to govern all this business of holding land in England. It is a principle that cannot be put on one side and forgotten when the war is over. Its application has been too vivid and its working too satisfactory for that. It has been seen too clearly that the interests of the landowners did stand in the way of the interests of the whole nation, and the whole nation knows how firmly they were set aside, how completely those old "rights" were disregarded. In the future there will be a very keen watch kept for any kind of recurrence of conflict, and if it should recur, this established principle will be called in on the side of the nation.

That is to say, that if in the future there arises any difference of opinion as to the use to be made of a portion of England, the question will not be, "What does the owner think?" but, "How can this best be used for the benefit of the nation?" If, for instance, a man owns a large piece of ground on the borders of a growing and crowded town and the town surges round it and he still seeks to keep it all to himself, it is entirely probable that he will be informed that he must sell it that it may be turned into a park to make a place where the people can breathe, and his private desire to put a high wall round it and keep it all to himself will not be considered a matter of any importance. Or if the landlord of some village refuses to allow any of his land to be used as allotments by the villagers, he will find himself abruptly compelled to give way to their desire unless he can prove that it is to the national interest that he should not do so. That, and that alone, must and will be the test for the future.

For we have discovered the value as well as the loveliness of our country. We had drifted into a habit of thinking slightingly of England, almost as one might of a man with

an enormous head and a very small body. It did not appear to us that as a country it was worth much except as a playground, and we were not really distressed by the fact that those who had power over it were turning it into a playground. What else, we asked, could you do with such a little country? There was our mighty population, and there were these, as we considered, totally inadequate acres. In so far as it produced coal and iron and had in one district a climate favourable to cotton spinning, there was something to be said for England, but for the rest it seemed only fit to be made into golf-courses. No one could take such a country seriously as a producer of food for such a population as our own, so we went on our foolish way till we were importing 80 per cent. of the wheat and flour which we required.

There has been the sharp lesson of these years, the astonishing urgent need and the equally astonishing revelation of what this our land can do for us, with realisation of how much more she might have done if we had not despised her and suffered ourselves to be robbed of her gifts. It has been made plain that we have in our hills and valleys

and our pleasant lowlands a great storehouse of food as well as of health. We had suffered the storehouse to be locked and the key thrown away, and we have only just made another and entered; but it is certain that we shall not go out again. By the time the urgent need for home-grown food is past we shall so thoroughly have acquired the habit of growing our own food that we shall continue to do so, and any landowner who seeks to revert to the old ways and to the unprofitable pasture, will find himself confronted once more with this principle which we have discovered, and reminded that he can only hold his land for the benefit of the nation.

For there is the double benefit. We had in time past the hundreds of thousands who loafed through life in our towns because there was no work for them to do, a menace to the nation by reason of their idleness, their need, and the feebleness of their bodies. It is good for the nation that it should have a great multitude of its people working healthfully in the open air, and that can only be obtained when the land is busy and filled with crops. Those who serve the land are themselves served, and being served they in their turn

serve the whole body. Whatever the commercial skill or the industrial might of a nation may be, its prosperity and strength must be founded on its rural population. The better in quality and quantity that population is, the greater will be the national power to withstand all strain and to endure in all time of test.

There is one other development which seems likely to follow in the end from the discovery of this principle of ours, and that is the recognition of the right of the nation to holiday places. That right was proclaimed in a fine and memorable fashion a little while ago when Sir Thomas Acland presented a great tract of Exmoor to the nation, and we shall hear more of it in future. There are in England certain areas which from their nature and position are and seem likely to remain barren, being unfit for corn or pasture. They are great hills and wide, wild moors, excellent in splendour. At present most of them are consecrated to game of one kind or another, and the man who ventures upon them is regarded as a peculiarly desperate criminal. Yet the birds they shelter are of little value, and most of them are close to great towns

where there are men and women who would live and work and play and pray all the better if they were free to spend one day in seven in this freedom, where the sun is on the heather at the height of summer, where in winter the wind drives the stinging rain that whips the blood to life. It does not seem at all important that a few rich people should be able to shoot grouse skilfully, but it does seem very important indeed that the millions in our mighty cities should have the right of access to the homes of the winds of God, where health and strength are to be had for the taking.

The possession of England—that is the offer of war to us who are English. We had lost so much and we were in peril of losing so much more, because we did not know what it was that lay within our grasp, and because we did not know that power remained to us. We were set about with shams which looked so powerful that we accepted them and even paid them the homage of plotting against them, but at this time we see them for what they are. We do not need to be jealous any more of all these owners of great estates, these rulers over mountain and plain. Their dominion cannot stand in the face of our

necessity, and we have become conscious of our necessity in the act of serving the necessity of our land. There is no need for any strife or violence at all. Those who stand against us are not giants to be slain, but quite ordinary mortals who can be elbowed gently out of the way if of their own free will they do not make room for us. We have to inaugurate no revolutions, to plan no insurrections. It is enough to decide where the benefit of the whole nation lies and all the rest must follow.

For it is the teaching of these years that England must be strong in herself, that this little country must develop and make perfect her own powers. We have kept our eyes in the ends of the earth too long; we have seen ourselves straddling across the seven seas and we have forgotten that that is a position of some peril. We know better now. We know that we have first of all to depend upon ourselves and upon those things which are within our own borders, and to do that we must make the fullest use of all that we have.

That knowledge is shared by rich and poor alike, and there is no need to look for obstinacy and injurious conduct from the rich merely because they are rich. Some of the wealthy

are unworthy even as some of the rest of us are unworthy, but it is perfectly possible for a rich Englishman to be as good an Englishman as any. He knows quite well that that which he has he holds in trust for the whole. He knows, too, that we stand or fall together, and it is not likely that such a man will do anything but strive to secure that England shall serve the English. In the past he may have shared the delusions with the rest of us, but now the delusions are dead and necessity has given us again those things which we had lost.

5. THE FUTURE IS IN OUR KEEPING

LITTLE by little during the progress of the war it has been declared to the world how nearly the Prussian had won the victory before ever the fighting began. He had been at work for a very long time, labouring with great skill and an almost incredible patience to perfect his plans for the domination of the world. No matter was too small for his attention, no enterprise too great for him to attempt. He was willing to work as carefully to win over a handful of peasants in Macedonia as to impregnate English policy with his ideas. We know now what was his aim and to what end all his efforts were made, but in those other days we did not understand. We saw only a nation of amazingly efficient people who were constantly developing new ideas, and who were pressing us hard in the markets of the world. We began by smiling rather indulgently upon them, we went on to

admire them, and we ended by trying to imitate them. All over the country there were people who looked upon Germany as the home of all good things, who believed and preached that the one way of salvation for us was to model ourselves in every detail of our living on our utterly admirable relations beyond the North Sea (which in those days was occasionally called the German Ocean). To all these the outbreak of war was an intolerable and incredible disaster. They felt, and many of them said, that there must be a mistake somewhere. That we should be allied with the French, whom they had always despised, against the gentle and industrious nation which they had always praised, was incomprehensible. . . . The rest of us were more fortunate in that we had never learnt so much about the virtues of the Prussian. In the hour of revelation we saw quite simply a nation that was willing to break its pledged word and tear up a treaty, and that was enough to reveal to us the fact that we were English. The years have confirmed the truth and the value of that discovery as we have seen the broadening of the gulf that parts us from those whom we had been invited to consider our brothers.

As that gulf has grown wider so have we English been drawn closer together, becoming more conscious of one another and of unity within the borders of our own land. Nothing is more significant of the present spirit of England than the determination of the members of the Seamen's and Firemen's Union to have nothing to do with Germans or German goods for a fixed period after the war. That determination is sometimes treated with lofty amusement by those who are in authority over us, but their amusement is merely the token of their failure to understand us—it might even be said that it is the token of their failure to be English. They do not realise what the war has meant to us.

But for the great mass of us this business of being English has been an enormously serious matter. It has been compounded not of words but of deeds, and those of the grimmest character. It was a politician who declared that "we will not sheathe the sword which we have not lightly drawn," but it was the silent millions who learnt how to fix bayonets and thereafter to use them. Presently some other politician may make an admirable speech about returning the sword to its scabbard,

but it will not be wonderful if the rest of us prefer to keep the bayonets fixed and to wait a while to see what may be the manner of the repentance of the Hun.

It may be that our approval of the decision of the sailors is very crude, but then war is crude and we have had experience of war, of wounds and of death, of treachery and foul cruelty. We know who began the bombing of open towns and the slaughter of women and children, and we have seen our dead. We have known the peril of the sea and the death which came out of the darkness, and if these others have forgotten the *Lusitania* we have not forgotten nor shall we forget. In the beginning we were told to consider the matter of Belgium, and we considered and acted lest these things come upon our homes also, and since then we have seen and known, and the abominations of the Hun are stamped on our memories for ever. Is there any man who has ever loved a woman who can think without the coldest, blackest fury of the German treatment of the women and girls of the occupied territories? Are such memories as these to be wiped out by the conclusion of a peace? Are we to forget all that we have

known simply because a state of war no longer exists? It has gone too deep for that, and if there are those among us who desire to resume friendliness with the German they can go to Germany and be friendly there. We, for our part, will remain in England.

. . . . . .

This decision which the sailors have made is important, because it is the first declaration of the future policy of the country which has been made by an organised body of workers capable of carrying out that which they have promised to perform. They have not consulted any politicians or permanent officials; they have not said anything about treaties or terms of peace, or in any way bound the Government to any course. They have left all governments and ambassadors and plenipotentiaries out of the question, and they have decided quite simply and naturally to do a certain thing which, to their mind, is demanded of Englishmen. Having seen rather more of the abominable side of the German character than most of us, they have decided that such people are not fit to associate with, and that so far as they are concerned the English shall not be compelled to associate with them for

quite a long time after the war. They have realised, that is, that some part of the future of our country is in their hands, and they have made up their minds to take care of it. So far as one can judge from the comments which have appeared up to the present, their decision is objected to by the intellectuals in the Labour movement, but approved of very heartily by the unions of the poorly paid, unskilled workers. It seems quite possible that this may be just one more case of those things being revealed to feeble folk which are hidden from the wise and prudent, and our International Socialists seem determined to be in the future as they have been in the past, a great deal too wise to be human.

But they, though they are so noisy, are so small a body as to be altogether negligible, and as I have said if they want to fraternise with Germans they can go to Germany. The one thing with which we are concerned is to keep German ways, ideas, theories and policies out of England for the future. Finding England, we have found how near England had been to becoming a sort of mental province of Germany, and in these years we have seen where German mentality leads. From

that infection our land is to be defended. Never again do we wish to hear of German wisdom or to be invited to copy German models. For we have seen the machine in operation. We know what are the fruits of that wisdom, the tokens of that culture.

We know, too, that in addition to making beasts of men the German system makes slaves of them, and that the German soldier goes forward not because his heart is in the business so much as because there is an officer behind him with a revolver. And slavery breeds bullies and all that hideous physical repression of the poor by those in authority of which hitherto we have known nothing. In the beginning many of us knew and many more suspected that this was to be a war of the free nations against a Power that would enslave the world. To-day that knowledge is confirmed, and every word which comes from the occupied territories is further proof. Horrors which one had imagined to be dead have been brought back to life, in the work of placing the German stamp upon the conquered peoples, as the slaves of the Prussian over-lords have worked their will at last on

those who are even more defenceless than themselves.

We see, then, to-day that the thing for which the Prussian stands is a hatred of freedom, and we are confirmed in our love of freedom by that very fact. The hatred of freedom leads to these cruelties, these detestable things, and that in itself would be enough to make of freedom a possession more precious than life. So we look at England, which has stood in all ages for freedom, with open, jealous eyes, realising that there had come even in England the dawn of peril for freedom, determined that at all cost we will protect and preserve that precious thing. And so far as we can see at present the way to make and keep it safe is to shut out the German from our land, to question all things that come from Germany, and to look instead into our history and consider those things which were done by our fathers in the days before they sought an alien wisdom beyond the seas.

It comes to this, that we know in these days that the business of the English is with England alone, and that England is the concern of none but her own people. Here is work enough

for us to do, and it is work which no hands but ours must touch. With the friendly world without our borders we have no concern beyond a friendly interest, and with the unfriendly world we have no concern at all except to keep it at a distance. We have found our own country. We have discovered its power and its loveliness, and it is enough. Presently we will return and be at home in England, and complete that which we began when we went out to fight for England.

. . . . . .

It happens that this book which I have written in so many places, in camps, in hospitals, and in camps again, must be finished in a room in the heart of London, within a stone's throw of Fleet Street where so many of us worked so light-heartedly four years ago. It is all very different now, and the men I knew are scattered over the world, wherever the war has reached, and many are dead, and many have suffered everything short of death. It is with us, the little company of the newspaper people, as it is with the rest of England, and we cannot have tidings of our friends or know if there shall ever be tidings any more. And we know that the end is not yet, and that

though returning we may stand and look at the old life, we can have no part in it while our service claims us and the needs of our country are still not satisfied. And all the place is peopled by those who will never return, so that one sees them at every corner going about their business in their accustomed fashion, and then one remembers. . . . They are gone, and many more, and it may be that others too will go before the dawning of that day for which we work and wait. There comes the thought of all who have passed, who are passing at this hour, who yet must pass. It is not necessary to claim for them that they died consciously and of set purpose for England; it is enough, surely, that they died. No one can do more than that; and if they had not been willing to take the risk of death the Hun would have been in London now and possessing the land, and as it was in Belgium, in Serbia and Roumania, freedom would have been drowned in the blood of old men and little children and the tears of women. But they took the risk and paid with their lives the price of our security, and left us England to be a charge and an inheritance.

Shall we who live be less than they ? Less we must be in that it is not given to us to serve as they served, but shall we refuse to carry on and make perfect their work ? They were willing to die for freedom—shall we fail who are only asked to live for freedom ? Shall we so order our life in the days to come that liberty shall perish from among us and our triumph be brought to nothing ? There is the action of the Seamen's and Firemen's Union to give the answer on behalf of all who have gone out to serve in these years, and to prove that the future is in our keeping.

England is returned into the hands of the English for them to make of it what they will. This little while we endure many regulations and restrictions because they are held to be necessary for the carrying out of the work in hand, but there comes the time when our rulers will have to come to us for approval or dismissal, and at that time it will only be necessary to ask one question—do you intend to preserve to us our inheritance, is it your determination that England shall be for the English ? And by the answer which they make we shall know them.

On Finding England

We have to build the memorial of our dead. There is no cathedral nor tall column that shall be worthy of them, nor anything that can be made with hands. No golden inscription shall suffice to tell their splendour, neither any carved marble nor cunning work of the painter. Their glory shall not be hidden within the pages of books or celebrated in verse, but it shall be England. For love of them and because of the love they bore this land we will make it better for their sons than it was for them, so that their fame shall be living in all the generations, and those who are not yet born shall praise them.

THE END

PRINTED BY MORRISON AND GIBB LTD., EDINBURGH